

UNSC Marine? Or Clone Trooper?

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Summary: UNSC Marines. The sons and daughters of the devil and the robbers of the anchor from the Navy, eagle from the Air Force, and the rope from the Army. What would happen if a clone Captain was to leave his world and enter that of the UNSC? What would his presence do to alter the outcome of the Human-Covenant war? Read and find out!

1. Chapter 1

THE TIMELINE, CHARACTERS, AND OTHER DETAILS IN THIS STORY HAVE BEEN ALTERED TO FIT THIS STORIES LINE OF EVENTS AND IS CENTERED ON THE AUTHORS OWN FREE WILL AND OPINIONS. THAT IS WHY IT IS CALLED FANFICTION PEOPLE. CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIZISM WANTED. NEGITIVE REVIEWERS WILL BE BLOCKED. IT IT HAPENS TOO OFTEN, GUEST REVIEWING WILL BE PROHIBITED.

AGES OF CHARACTERS:

Ahsoka Tano- 16 years

Captain Rex- 17 years(Standard) 25(Clone)

Clones- 14-2 years(Standard) 19-12(Clone)

Skywalker- 21-25 years

Amidala- 30-35 years

Kenobi- 30-45 years

Sergeant Johnson- 30-45years

Dr. Halsey- 40-50 years

Lord Hood- 55-65
years

'...'-Thoughts

\.../-Documents/letters

\...\'-Comm-radio

"..."-Talking

{...}-Translations

[...]-AI

FEBRUARY 25BBY

2 YEARS INTO CLONE WAR

08:30 HOURS, GALACTIC MILITARY STANDARD(GMS)

SOMEWHERE IN THE OUTER RIM

GRAND NAVY OF THE REPUBLIC(GNR) RESOLUTE

For Ahsoka Tano, it was just another day and another cruddy mission to go on. The last mission she had participated in did not end well. It had been just her and her master. If Captain Rex had been there, the outcome would have been drastically different.

Most people just don't understand or know that clones are human. Most think they are 'flesh droids', 'tin cans', 'expendable soildgers' to be used in war, and worst of all, 'genetically inferior lab-rats'. Some even think they are droids made to look like humanoids. Every time she heard somebody talk like that, she felt sick. To her Rex was irriplaceable, unigue.

Captain Rex was about six-two with blonde hair, which was very rare for a clone trooper, he was also a little bigger than the other troopers. His CT number was also different than the others. CT-01/7567. She was curious why his number had the zero one infront of it while the other clones did not.

Thier mission is to capture a CIS weapons and technology developer and take said developer/scientist to Courasaunt. Ahsoka was to lead the fight above the planet in space and the skies while her Master and Rex made the main assault. She had been trying to find the clone Captain for a while when she saw him near his gunship.

"You ready Rex?"

"As ready as i can get."

"Rex, i need to talk to you after you get back to the ship."

"Why not now? We have time."

"It can wait, Rex."

"If it's related to the mission, i need to know."

"It's not mission related Rex."

"Just making sure. No harm in that."

Rex checks his chrono and sees it's one minute until they head to the planet surface.

"One minute warning! Board your ships and let's get moving!" Rex yells out.

Ahsoka watches as Rex puts on his helmet and boards his gunship. He turns around and gives her a two finger salute. Then the gunship doors slide shut and moves towards the front of the line.

"Be safe Rex. Come back in one piece."

SEVERAL HOURS LATER

RESOLUTE

Ahsoka had just witnessed the last of the gunships land back inside the Resolute's hanger. The entire operation was an elaborate trap laid out by Greivous and the CIS to take out anybody who had set foot in the system. As she rushes to the hanger, the Resolute jumps into hyperspace.

Cries for medics echo throughout the entire hanger deck of the ship. A single figure heads in her direction. Lieutenant Fives, Rex's XO, makes his way to her.

"What happened down there Fives?"

"IEDs, droidikas, commandos...everything. It was a massacre."

"Where's Rex?"

"No idea, he'll turn up somewhere in this madhouse. Looks like I better get a report started up and the number of casualties reported. Oh, the General is in medbay, he got hit as soon as we had landed."

"Thanks Fives."

"Anytime sir."

Ahsoka couldn't believe it. Just hours before, the majority of the 501st had been alive. Now it was just a shredded shell of its former self. The wounded in medbay, the dead left for the Seppies, and Rex who knows where. Ahsoka walked to her room and found an envelope sitting on her bed. It had Rex's jaig eyes on the front with her name below. She opened it up and unfolded a piece of flimsi.

\Ahsoka, if you're reading this, I may not be returning from my latest mission. If any piece of my equipment had been found or recovered from the field, I want you to keep it. It's yours. Same as my things still on the Resolute in my bunk room. If I haven't already told you, I've been holding back several things from you. I've developed a relation to you more than the regs and your code would

allow. I can only hope you felt or feel the same for me. See you some other time in a better place. Rex. P.S. Thank Jesse for delivering my letter for me./

Ahsoka was floored. Rex was gone, and he had been holding back how much he cared about her. She was going to tell him how much she cared for him after the mission had been completed.

"Why? Why did you leave me Rexie?"

Then she heard someone knocking on her door.

"Enter."

The door opened to reveal Sergeant Jesse, still in his armor, no helmet, and his right arm in a makeshift sling.

"I see you found the letter."

"Yeah. H..he wanted me to thank you for delivering it to me."

"It was no problem. I just wish i could have done more."

"How did he...?"

"He had taken cover behind some sort of equipment in the first floor labs. Tinny fired a rocket and the entire thing went up in a pure white ball of light. When my sight returned to normal, there...there was nothing left. Not even a helmet or shard of armor."

UNSC CONTROLLED SPACE

REACH

MID-FEBRUARY 2545

Grand Admiral Lord Terence Hood was surprised at first when he had recieved word that a heavily wounded human male had been recovered from a Innies outpost by a Navy Special Warfare unit in the outer colonies. The male had been transported to Reach via the Paris-class frigate named the Meriwether Lewis by a Lieutenant Commander Jacob Keyes.

Then he had read another report from the SpecWarf team leader that stated the person recovered was not UNSC military and was deffenitely not Innies. The report also stated that Doctor Halsey had been near the dock where the Lewis had landed and had started working on trying to save the man who was a potential intel gold mine.

Now he was on Reach at an ONI base in the mountains, waiting for the man to wake up. They had found him in the remains of some sort of ballistic-resistant armor plates simmilar to the armored EVA suits that some naval engineers have for when they need to do repairs outside of a ship in the vaccum of space.

He walks through the base with two Marines as gaurds and enters the section of the base where ONI had the mysterious male being treated by Halsey.

"What do we have so far Halsey?"

"Wasn't expecting you to be here Terence. He has been adjusting and recovering well."

"You found something, didn't you?"

"...Yes. Durring a routine full-body medical scan, we found a carbon fiber microchip in his left forearm."

"What was in this microchip?"

"it was removed from the mans arm. The AI's crakced it just a few minutes ago. It's some sortof military file. It has his whole entire career, medical checkups, everything. But, there's no name, only a six-digit serial number." Halsey says as she hands the Admiral a datapad with a profile and a single photo.

"An officer. Very impressive record. War vet, trained troops...this guy should be commanding a battalion instead of a company. How old is he?"

"Some things point at the mid-twentys, estimated. And others point to the late teens."

"That is interesting."

"Yes it is. He should be awake soon. A toumor had to be removed from his brain and the chip had to be removed, so he had to be drugged for the operation."

The first thing Rex feels is some sort of mattress against his bare back. Then he feels a soft sheet covering his body up to his upper chest/armipt level. Then he hears muffled voices and sees a white light. He blinks a few times and his hearing clears. A light shines down onto him from a ceiling.

Then an older woman in a lab coat appears in his sight line. A name tag says Doctor C Halsey in galactic basic.

"Can you hear me soildger?" She asks.

"Y-yes ma'am. Wh-where...?"

"Try not to talk too much. All questions will be answered as soon as i am done with this exam. Do you feel any pain? And if you do, point at the spot. If no, right thumb down, if yes, thumb up."

Rex points his thumb at the floor as the Doctor said.

"Good. Can you hear and see clearly?" Halsey asks.

Thumbs up.

"Excellent. I'm going to move the bed so you can be sitting up. Somebody wants to talk to you." Halsey says.

The bed rises and Rex sees a white officers cap, an older mans face, and then a white uniform with gold trim and white pants with red, gold, and black stripes down each leg. The ammount of medals screamed experience and a high-rank. Thne his mind clicks, the only man with a

white uniform in the military was the Grand Admiral of the Navy.

He acted on instinct and saluted. His salute was returned and the Admiral gestured to a figure just behind him. Two men in foreign armor and carrying foreign rifles turn and leave the room.

"I'm Grand Admiral Hood. I know you have questions, and the time to ask them is now." Hood says.

"Sir, where am i and what am i doing here?" Rex asks.

"This location is classified. As for what you are doing here, you were recovered by a SpecWarf team durring a raid, almost dead. Apparently, you were found inside a terrorist base and were tourtured for intel and information you never had. They believed you were a member of an intelligence agency."

"Ehh, now i remember. That guy with that cig just wouldn't let up. I don't remember anything else past some sort of explosion and white light going off inside the room i was being held in just after this...guy left." Rex says.

"What did he look like?"

"Older, they called him Colonel. He loked former military and smoked a slightly sweet-smelling cig." Rex discribes.

"Former Marine Colonel Robert Watts. He's the leader of a terrorist group. We've been trying to get our hands on him for years. He's orchestrated bombings on civillians on almost all of the planets in the Epsilon Eridanus sector." Hood says.

"Sir, what part of the Republic am i in?" Rex asks, not recognizing the system names, which didn't match any known system in the inner or mid rings.

"To be perfectly straight to you son, you're not in your 'Republic', anymore. You're in the Milkyway galazy, Epsilon Eridandi System, and you're on a planet known as Reach. We're part of the United Nations Space Command, or the UNSC, the current military arm of the United Earth Government, or UEG, the galactic government. The UEG is a civillian-controlled government that dictates all the policies of the UNSC. In turn, the UNSC controlls the colonies and trade-routes while the UEG sets up the governing bodies of the colonies. The UNSC only gets involved in a planet's politics when a threat is imminent or pending to a colony or we are asked to."

"So, the government is pretty much a Democratic Republic?" Rex asks.

"Exactly. Now, the UNSCDF is short on officers with experience in special operations. We saw your record after we gained acess to a microchip in your arm. And i'm extending an offer to allow you to operate with the UNSCDF as an officer." Hood says.

"Do i have another option or not?" Rex asks.

"You can say no, but you may end up in the hands of the Office of Naval Intelligence, the spooks of the UNSC. They can make you dissapear and run you ragged until you spill your guts about where

you came from and whatever else they want by force. If you accept the offer, you'll be given full protection from ONI because you'll work for me and high command directly. You have the option of information to Doctor Halsey or myself at anytime."

"Well, fighting is all that i've known... So why the hell not, count me in sir. Beats being handed over to a group that would do God knows what to me"

"Good. Find a name and the proper records will be placed into the systems to make you a legitimate citizen of the UEG and a Liutenaunt in the UNSCDF Marines." Hood says as he leaves.

"Now i have a few questions for you." Halsey says.

"..Ok..?" Rex says, unsure of what she wants.

"I've run some tests and your aging issue has been revealed. I can effectively slow it to the point where you'll live a longer and more healthy life than the one you had ben living where you came from. I'll have to do an operation. I will not lie, it will be painful. But, this due to that the process must be done on a concious patient. Past operations have been extremely sucessful. It's your choice."

"Let's do it Doctor. I've been waiting years for something to come allong and slow this acceleratd aging." Rex says.

"Please, call me Cathriene. As soon as your wounds are healed, we'll be able to do the operation. Until then, relax, and try not to strain or stress yourself out. You're in good hands, Liutenaunt." Halsey says smiling warmly.

2. Chapter 2

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIZISM WANTED. READER OPINIONS ARE VALUED AND MAY IMPACT THE STORIES DEVELOPMENT. PLEASE REVIEW! NEGITIVE REVIEWERS WILL BE BLOCKED!

EX- Explosives or explosives residue

TAC-COM- Tactical communications channel/system

CNM- Command unit that covers a pre-set radius on a certain TAC-COM channel

ARGUS- EX detector unit. Can be handheld, vehicle mounted, or in an airport metal detector and scanners

BDU- Battle Dress Uniform

HUD- Heads up Display

CO- Commanding officer

NCO- Noncomissioned officer

ONI- Office of Naval Inteligence

OCS- Officer candidate school

IED- Improvised explosive device

ABG- After Battle of Geonosis

UNSC CONTROLLED SPACE

EPSILON ERIDANUS SYSTEM

REACH

MARCH 2545

Within the past few weeks, Rex had learned the UNSC's history from 2160 through 2544 in order to blend into the population better. Halsey had done the operation, and it was successful. It did hurt a lot at first, but it passed. The history he had learned while he was laid up was quite amazing, considering the Republic's several hundred-thousand year history. He had also learned a lot about UNSC Marine Corps protocols and regulations, which were similar in some ways, but not similar in others to the GAR regs. He also sent his new name, Richard Edward Xanders, and several other things, such as DNA, fingerprints, and signature to HIGHCOM for processing. He had received his ID, back pay, and gear earlier that week.

He was issued armor, helmet, boonie hat, ball cap, and other things. Then his orders. He was to board a frigate at New Alexandria's Space Elevators orbital dock and was to await further orders as it was enroute to another planet in-system.

Rex walked into the Spaceport in his BDU with a UNSC officer's ball cap on that had the single silver bar of a First Lieutenant proudly displayed on the front of the hat, black tactical/HUD glasses, ruck over his left shoulder, M6C pistol with an infrared laser sight under its barrel holstered on his right leg, and MA5D rifle case in his right hand. Then he noticed he had captured the attention of almost everybody he passed.

"Look mommy! A Marine! A real-life Marine!" A bright-eyed kid about six says as he caught sight of him.

When he had been in the GAR, nobody had acted like that when he or his brothers were seen in public. Most just ignored them or looked at them with mild hatred.

'I can get used to this. Full rights, a solid salary, free housing...everything I'll need to survive in this place. But, nothing could replace her.' Rex thinks as he compares the UNSC Marines to what the GAR was like back in the Republic.

He knew his letter had more than likely made its way into Ahsoka's hand by now, as well as his status going from MIA, to KIA. He could only hope she was still the same as she had always been.

COURASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

EARLY MARCH 2 ABG (25BBY)

It had been two weeks since Rex's death. The 501st was taken off the front lines and were to sit and wait on Courasaunt for replacement troopers and until her Master was fully healed. Ahsoka's morale had dropped, she no longer had her snippy attitude, or wore the same clothing. She had gone back to the standards. Brown, baggy jedi robes with a dark brown cloak and hood. The 'perfect' model padawans attire.

As she laid down after another day at the temple, she quickly found herself in a deep sleep. She found herself back on Mortis, in the cave where she had seen and had talked to her future self.

"I see you have lost the one you cared for." Says a soft, feminine voice as a soft, white light appears behind her.

"How...? The dagger..."

"The force cannot be distroyed, altered, yes, but not distroyed. You are in dangerous territory. Stray farther, and you'll turn to the dark."

"But i have nothing left. Rex was everything to me."

"And he still is everything to you, as it will stay that way."

"Are you saying...?"

"He is alive and well. He is not in your galazy, but another."

"Will i see him again?"

"You might. Even the force cannot foresee everything. Good night, daughter of the light."

Ahsoka immedeately shot up, wide awake and gasping for breath. As she regained her bearings, she felt something cold and hard in her right hand. She opened her hand and found Rexs melted and burnt pair of ID tags on a metal chain. It was then that she knew what she had just experienced was a vision, and not a dream. She places the tags around her neck and lies back down.

UNSC OVERLORD

PARIS-CLASS FRIGATE

EPSILON ERIDANUS SYSTEM

NEAR COLONY WORLD OF TRIBUTE

When Rex got out of cyro, he was relieved. While he was under the medications, he had remembered and 'dreamed' about the worst moments in his career. Salucami, First and Second Geonosis, Naboo, and then the weapons facility. Rex had been given and had read his orders right before he had left the space elevator. He is supposed to take command of a Marine Special Warfare(SpecWarf) squad aboard the Overlord that had a mission planetside to find an Insurrectionst bomb factory.

After he got out of the eight foot long tube, he headed for the lockers, got dressed, slipped on his armored boots, got his armored plates and tac vest adjusted, put on his HUD glasses, and then put on his helmet that had a CNM on the right side that enabled him to access any UNSC radio frequency he was authorized to access, even civilian E-band channels.

As he finishes linking up with the Overlords TAC-COM, he grabs his M6 from a magnetic clamp inside the top of the locker, slides the catch back, placing a single semi-armor-piercing high-explosive fifty magnum caliber round into the chamber, flicks on the safety, and holsters it. He then pulls his MA5D from a magnetic clamp running the height of the locker.

The MA5D has a smart-link scope built into the section just in front of the ammo counter, burst, full auto, and semi auto select fire switch, and a thirty-six round clip. Rex puts a clip into the weapons receiver, slides the bolt forward, and engages the safety.

Rex heads out of the locker room and heads to a make-shift briefing room where he was to meet his unit, which was to be briefed by a Lieutenant Colonel Aboim.

Lieutenant Colonel Aboim was preparing to brief his best SpecWarf squad when the door opened and a First Lieutenant walked in.

"You must be Lieutenant Xanders."

"Yes sir."

"Lieutenant Colonel Aboim. I've read your record. Damn good to have you in my unit." Says the Colonel as he holds out his hand.

"Glad to be here sir." Rex replies as he shakes the Colonel's hand.

"Do you know what you will be doing in this unit?"

"Yes sir. It was all laid out in my orders. How many men are in the group I will be in command of?"

"Well, let's see, a drone crew of two, five Hornet pilots, two squads of seven, and the platoon Gunnery Sergeant, making the total twenty-three including yourself."

"Who is my exec?"

"That would be Gunny Sergeant Avery Johnson."

Gunnery Sergeant Avery Junior Johnson was a career Marine. He had just gotten out of cyro and was leading his group of Marines to a make-shift briefing room where Colonel Aboim was supposed to be. As he walks through the doors, he sees the Colonel talking to another officer. And catches the end of a conversation.

"...Sergeant Avery Johnson."

"Sir!"

"And there he is now. Alright Marines, take a seat so you can get

going."

The Marines sit down on ammo and ordinance crates, a few chairs, and lean against walls.

"Marines, inside this abandoned heavy-hauler repair and distribution complex outside of Casbah is a suspected Innies bomb factory." Says the Colonel as he gestures to a projected image of a run-down garage surrounded by frost covered pines and a five-foot chain link fence on one of the walls

"Now, ONI believes the Innies have a new mixture being made and being shipped out into the entire system. I do not need to tell you what would happen if it was to land on Reach or, God forbid, Earth. ONI also believes the Innies to be armed with mil-spec grade weapons. Also expect a firefight, these guys are no slackers. The Hornets will drop you near the facility. Planetside, it is still night time, you will infiltrate the compound, take as many alive as you can, find the EX, get a sample, exfil, and destroy the factory. Any questions or concerns?"

Not a single Marine raises their hand, stands, or talks.

"Now, on another note, this is Lieutenant Xanders, he will be taking over the platoon as CO. Skids up in two hours. Dismissed!"

The Marines move towards the door with the intent to leave. Rex had done what he was about to do too many times when he had to re-build Torrent after the Teth ambush and have new troopers be brought in as replacements.

"Hold it. All senior NCOs, pilots, and drone operators stay, the rest can leave."

Five Marines and the five pilots stay behind and walk back towards the projection. Four of the pilots were Warrant Officer 1 through 3 and the group is led by a Chief Warrant Officer. A Warrant Officer is just above the enlisted and just below Second Lieutenant, but had the same power as a Major, Captain, or Lieutenant in certain situations when said ranks are absent. The higher the grade, the higher the 'rank'. Chief Warrant Officer was the highest level a person could go. Then, if a person wanted to keep advancing in rank, they have to complete basic and OCS, then they are given Captain bars or First Lieutenant bars.

The remaining Marines are the platoon Gunnery, two Staff Sergeants, a Sergeant, and a Corporal.

"I know what you are all thinking, and even what your men are. You assume I'm a Corbulo straight out of the academy. But, you can't be more dead wrong. I was recently given a combat commission and this unit due to my...very interesting career. I know the plan called for insertion in a clearing in the pines near the factory, but, due to past experiences, I suspect that the clearing is a trap. IEDs, the works."

"Then what's the plan LT?" Johnson asks.

"We move in earlier than planned, move in while it is still dark out. We will have night vision while they won't. One group of two Hornets

will drop onto the roof while another group of two will insert in the parking lot. Who here are the drone operators?"

"That would be me and Perry here." Says the Sergeant as he gestures to the Corporal.

"You two will deploy the drone from a safe distance from your Hornet and use the drones ARGUS to see if the Innies have any bombs already out there. The assault teams will be jumping from the skids half a foot from the deck. The Hornets will then circle the compound and give fire support if nessecary."

"When do we head planetside sir?" Asks a Staff Sergeant with an Irish accent.

"What's your name?"

"Staff Nolan Bryne."

"We head planetside in half an hour. We hit the target in one hour, so get your men set and armed ASAP. Dismissed."

Rex follows the group of Marines after taking one last look at the real-time projection on the wall before leaving and walking down the hall behind them.

3. Chapter 3

REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW! I NEED REVIEWS TO MAKE CHAPTERS HAPPEN AND MISTAKES FIXED! CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIZISM WANTED!

COURASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

MARCH 2 ABG (25BBY)

Anakin Skywalker had just been released from the med-bay by the healers. He knew the battle had been lost, but he had no idea how bad. He was looking for his padawan to find that out. He walks through the massive halls of the temple dorms to Ahsokas room door. He eventually reaches it and presses the ringer on the doors outer control pannel.

"Enter."

The door slides open and he walks in. He immedeately sees something that almost makes him take an involuntary step backwards. His padawan wasn't wearing her usual clothing. In place of the skirt, leggings, and top were brown and baggy padawan robes and a dark brown cloak hanging on a hook in the corner.

"Master!? When did you get out of the med-bay?"

"Just a few minutes ago."

"Oh."

"And i have a lot of catching up i see. How bad did we

loose?"

"Loose what?"

"The battle. Did we get that weapons developer?"

"We didn't get the developer. The whole battle was a trap from what Fives and the others told me. Most of Torrent was wiped out...including Rex."

"Rex is dead? How?"

"He took cover behind some sort of a device and it was hit by a rocket. Nothing left but his tags." Ahsoka says as she reaches up to her neck and pulls out a set of tags, melted around the edges and burned.

"How long have i been in med-bay?" Anakin asks

"About two weeks now Master."

"Two weeks? Then i have missed alot. Who has taken over Torrent as CO?"

"Fives is CO now. Appo is second. Most of the survivors are now Sergeants and team leaders, the rest are replacements and transfers from other units."

"I need to check in with Master Yoda. See you later Ahsoka." Anakin says as he leaves her room and heads towards Master Yodas meditation chamber.

EPSILON ERIDANUS

COLONY OF TRIBUTE

SURFACE

Rex and the others in his SpecWarf platoon were flying at high speeds just above the top of the pine and evergreen trees below. It was almost T minus two minutes to thier target. His Hornet was leading the v-wing of the five craft with Johnson's Hornet on the right. The drone crew was bringing up the rear. At each end of the v-wings 'tails' were the other two Hornets carrying six Marines each that were the assault squads.

Rex's Hornet would have to do a drop on the roof to let himself and Staff Bryne off, and then drop Staff Pete Stacker and Gunny Johnson off in the parking lot.

"One minute out! Lock and load!" Rex shouts into the TAC-COM as they near the target.

Eighteen simultanious clicks of safties being switchd to off, clips being placed into weapons, and bolts and slides being cycled sound over the comm.

As the compound comes into sight, the drone Hornet breaks off and circles the compound as the drone operators launch the portable drone from the moving Hornet. The drone is half a meter wide by a quarter

meter long. It was portable by backpack and was lightweight. It was often transported in three pieces and assembled before deployment.

As the drone circles the compound, the other four Hornets head for their drop off locations. Rex and Bryne jump from their Hornets skid onto the cement roof just before their squad of six Marines do. Almost simultaneously, the other group of six Marines land in the courtyard below with Johnson and Stacker.

Rex's group stack up at a door on the roof and Bryne turns the handle and opens the door. They enter and start moving down a set of stairs to a second floor. They pass and clear several offices and rooms converted into barracks, rations, and munitions storage.

As they reach another door at the end of the floor, they hear automatic small and medium weapons fire coming from below.

/LT, these guys are armed with old MA style weapons and automatic pistols. Watch yourselves when you get into the garage level!/
Johnson warns over the comm.

"Will do Gunny. Any of your men hit?" Rex asks.

/Negative, we're behind a few abandoned forklifts and a cinderblock wall. We're good for now./

"Keep your heads down and return fire. We'll clean those bastards out. Down the stairs, double time!"

As they near the bottom of the stairs, Rex finds a door wide open and the sound of weapons and the smell of freshly fired weapons fills the air. He does a quick look around the corner and sees the Innies behind cement support pillars and equipment. A row of large truck tires and a delivery van are on one side of the garage behind a closed door.

"Here's the plan, we're going to ambush these guys. Watch your fire, there's a delivery truck that is a possible IED in there. Go!"

The Marines swing and swarm out of the doorway firing their weapons at the Innies in the garage. Rex is the last out and sees an Innie hiding behind a corner behind a rolling tool chest directly across from the door. In his hand is what appeared to be a key fob for the truck on the lift on the other side of the garage. Rex fires a burst at the Innie hiding, the first round hits the key fob and the remaining rounds strike the man's hand.

Johnson had just ran the twenty foot 'no-man's land' between his lift and the garage. As he enters, he sees the new Lieutenant drag a male Innie out from behind a rolling tool chest in a corner that has a bleeding hand and tosses him in the middle of the floor.

"Clear!" A Sergeant shouts as his group looks behind the truck.

"Nobody in the truck!" Bryne reports as he jumps down off the lift.

"All clear LT." Stacker says.

"Bring the survivors over here. Use your ARGUS and search the area."
Rex orders.

Three more are dragged over and thier hands are zip-tied and are sat up on thier knees. Rex looks down at each Insurrectionist.

A while later, Johnson walks over to the LT to give him the results.

"ARGUS can't find anything. Ony thing registering is black powder and primer residue from the guns."

"Hold this for me Gunny." The Liutenaunt says as he hands Johnson his MA5.

He watches as the LT circles the group of four Innies and then stops right behind the one whos hand was mangled. The LT quickly stomps down on the mans left leg, making the bone shatter and making the man scream out in pain a full second and a half later.

"Where. Are. The bombs."

The Innie just stares up at the LT, locks his mouth closed, and doesn't even whimper.

"The hard way i see." The LT says as he breaks the other leg.

The man is somehow able to stay upright so the LT kicks him forward and to the pavement. Johnson then hears the sound of a few teeth snaping.

"Tires." The man says.

"I didn't hear you, speak louder."

"The. Tires." The man says slower.

"Check those truck tires!" Stacker orders.

The Marines check the tires and find EX residue inside of it, one not in the ARGUS system.

/Liutenant, this is Sergeant Dixon. Sir, we got a hit on the ARGUS. A truck just pulled into a Jim Dandy near the highway ten klicks from here./ The drone crew member reports.

"What about the prisoners?" A Marine asks.

"Stacker!"

"Sir!"

"Your team will stay here and gaurd these prisoners until they can be transported, everybody else get aboard your craft! Sergeant Dixon!"

/Sir!/"

"You and Corporal Perry will set up an FOB here until we get back.

Keep that drone circling."

/Yes sir!//

Johnson hands the LT his rifle on the way out. As they board the Hornet, the Johnson grabs the M99 SASR case from beside him, opens it, and takes out the rifle. He then grabs a small box from a pouch on his leg and puts it in the receiver and cycles a bolt.

Rex jumps down from the Hornets skids onto the roof of an office tower with Johnson. They both take positions near the ledge of the tower and Johnson sets up his SASR. Rex uses the smart link scope on his MA5D and finds the Jim Dandy. Johnson also finds and zeros in on the trucks driver, who was paying his bill and heading out to his truck.

"You got 'em Gunny?"

"Yeah, target's in sight. He's taking out his key fob."

"Shit, get 'em. The fobs the det!"

Johnson fires a single round that hits the unsuspecting Innies in the torso, ripping him to shreds.

/LT, we got another bomb. Stool where the guy was eating./

"Roger Dixon. Bryne, get in there now. There's a bomb in the restaurant. Second stool in. We're inbound."

/Roger./

Brynes Hornet skims over the four lane highway just above the traffic and the Marines jump into the parking lot and charge into the restaurant. The VTOL takes off to stop traffic on the highway.

Taylor 'Dutch' Miles was a trucker for Traxus industries. He had been born on Mars with oil in his blood line. His father had been a trucker and his mother was a mechanic. He had just been assigned a route on Tribute. He was about to stop at a Jim Dandy when a UNSC aircraft swooped down right in front of his truck and stopped.

"Shit! Damn flyboys!" Dutch says as he stomps on the brakes and hits the trucks horn.

Not soon after, he hears another craft and two thumps on his trucks roof.

"What in the hell?" He opens his door and looks up to see two Marines on his trucks roof. One armed with a standard rifle and the other with a sniper rifle.

"You got the package yet Bryne?"

/Ye sir, a purse seems to be the object in question./

"Get that thing out of there and search that place. I want the carrier."

/Down on the ground now! Don't move!/"

"Bryne, respond. What's going on!?"

"Sir, a woman has a kid by the throat. Shit! Detonator!"

"Take her out now Johnson!"

"Don't have a shot! Kid's in the way!" The sniper replies.

"Bryne, Marines, if anybody has a shot, take 'er out!"

The rattle of more than one M7 is heard and then an explosion. Dutch watches as a hauler in the lot explodes as well as the Jim Dandy he was just about to stop at.

"Shit! Overlord, Overlord, blue casualties, i say again, blue casualties, send medvac and alert Casbah Emergency! Thirty plus civil and seven Marines down!" The Marine with the rifle shouts into a comm

/We read you Lieutenant. Packages have been retrieved from previous objective. Medvac en-route with Pelicans. Casbah Emergency has been notified and have resources inbound. Overlord out./

"Xanders over and out."

"What the hell just happened?" Dutch asks out loud.

The Marine sniper turns around and see him standing there and stare at him.

"A bomb is what happened." The sniper says as the Marine breaks it down and places it in a case on his back. Both get back on the craft they had arrived on and fly away from the highway as the flashing red and blue lights of Casbah emergency response teams arrive with more Marines in Pelicans and Warthogs.

4. Chapter 4

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM WANTED! PLEASE REVIEW!

Sci-Div - Scientific Division, UNSC HIGHCOM/ONI co-op division

SOL SYSTEM

EARTH

NORTH AMERICA

GREAT LAKES REGION

CHICAGO

O'HARE INTERNATIONAL SPACEPORT

MARCH 2545

ONE MONTH AFTER TRIBUTE

For the past month, Gunny Johnson and Rex had been at an ONI facility on Reach pending an investigation. The investigation was to determine if a bad decision by either of them had led to the deaths of six Marines, over thirty civilian casualties, and over twenty thousand credits of damage. ONI had investigated every possibility and questioned each Marine and pilot in the unit. They found no fault in either of their decisions that day.

But, HIGHCOM had decided to give them a break by way of a short four day leave on Earth. Rex had found out that Johnson had been born in Chicago. Johnson had told Rex that he was going to visit his Aunt at an active retirement home called the Serotopian.

While Johnson was with his Aunt, Rex was going to his apartment, which he had learned from an email from Lord Hood, was near Lake Michigan.

As the two SpecWarf Marines in full dress uniforms exit the terminal, heads turn and people talk and point as they walk past. The standard dress uniform for the UNSC Marine officer is a white shirt, navy blue pants with a yellow and red stripe down the outside of the leg, rank displayed on the shoulders, medals on the left breast above the pocket, name tag and unit citations above the right, current unit patch on the left, and former unit on the right directly below the official UNSC seal.

As they clear the crowd of people around the busy terminal hub, they head to the gates where a person could get a taxi, rental, bus, or maglev into the heart of the spoke-and-wheel system of four, six, and eight lane highways that were part of the cities vital lifeline.

"Where should we regroup after we're done LT?"

"It's Rex, Gunny. We regroup right back here in four days."

"Sounds ok with me, but what do you mean?"

"What do i mean?"

"The Rex thing?"

"A nickname i picked up. It's also my initials."

"Now i get it si...err..Rex." Johnson says as he heads for the spaceports maglev depot.

Rex heads for the automated taxi depot near the main entrance into the 'port. As he reaches the line of taxis, he finds a black and yellow one with a flashing sign. Transport: LT Xanders. Rex tries the door handle and finds it locked.

"Alright you bag of bolts, open up!"

The taxi's trunk springs open along with the drivers side gull-winged door. After beeping at him.

Rex puts his ruck in the back, walks to the open drivers door, and removes his hat. He flops down into the drivers seat and places his

officers hat on the dash. Then a navy blue female AI in a naval officers uniform pops up on the dash right next to his hat as the car pulls out into traffic.

[Liutenaunt Xanders?]

"That would be me. And you are...?"

[Smart AI Melissa. You must have done something to have recieved me.]

"Pardon?"

[...You haven't been told?]

"Told what?"

[Well, apparently i've been assigned to you as your personal Smart AI.]

"...This will be...interesting to say the least."

[I agree one hundred percent. I've looked into your file and i've noticed that there are a lot of black ink and is vauge on details, care to elaborate?] Melissa says as she dissapears from the dash and shows up full sized in the passenger seat holding an open file folder in her hands.

"Highly classified."

[Until what rank?] She says as she closes the folio and snaps her fingers, making it dissapear.

"Lord Hood, Doctor Halsey, and myself are the only ones who know."

[Can you tell me? Please?]

"Scan for recording devices in this taxi first."

[Already did. All clear.]

"HIGHCOM SpecWarf, black operations. ONI doesn't know i existed wen i was in black ops. Had a little genetic altercation simmilar an ONI program from the early 2530's, body development acceletation, and early start with training."

[How early?]

"Fully trained boot, my rank was at buck Sergeant by nine. Just turned twenty this past January. Don't remember anything but training and doing missions since i was a kid."

[Incredible. We might just make a good team together sir.]

"It's Rex, not sir or LT. You're not a Marine or in the field...yet."

[Alright then, Rex. Lean back and enjoy the ride.] Melissa says as she dissapears and the back of the drivers chair tilts backwards a

bit and a massager starts.

Melissa watches the Liutenaunt relax from her projector in the dash. Soon the young Liutenaunt is soundly asleep.

'I wonder which Sci-Div person was sick enough in the head to do this to him.' Melissa thinks as she manuevers the taxi through the heavy traffic of Chicagos Lake Michigan highway system to the apartment complex.

COURASAUNT

GNR NAVAL YARDS

GNR RESOLUTE AND NEGOTIATOR

MARCH 2 ABG

Ahsoka was on edge. Torrent Company was about to go on thier first combat mission without Rex leading them. Rex had been replaced by Fives and Appo had been promoted from Company Sergeant to Liutenaunt. The majority of the company were now 'Spaarti' clones and the survivors were now mostly Sergeants, senior squad, and team leaders. Several others had been transfered to other, newer Spaarti units as Liutenaunts and Captains.

"Ready to go Commander?" Fives asks as he walks up with Jesse.

"Yeah...it's just...he's not here."

"I know. It'll be different for all of us. But, we'll get the mission done." Fives says as he walks off to get the company preped and briefed.

"Have you seen the new guys in action yet sir?" Jesse asks.

"No i have not Jesse."

"They attack in waves, thier aim is worse than a Hutts, and seem to like to do mass, frontal assaults on targets! Most don't even seem to think individually ethier." Jesse says as the clone NCO and Jedi walk into the Resolutes hanger bay.

"That is not good. Not good at all."

"Yeah, i told the others to stay behind them. A commando team was almost killed by a Spaarti heavy gunner durring an op a few weeks ago when they were working with the 14th Inf on Graftikar."

"Good call. But, knwoing Master, he'll be right at the front of the charge, when one occurs. Have you told Fives yet?"

"Yeah. You know what the mission is this time?"

"Naboo. A major Gungan clan leader has made a pact with Grevious."

"Naboo? What's with the Seppies and Naboo!?"

"The war technically started there with a Trade Fed blockade several years prior to Geonosis. Senator Amidalia is one of thier top targets."

"So that's why we always have to rescue her from the Seppies. Always wondered why."

"Anyway, we're to kick them out of the swamps and stop thier advance before they reach Theed. At any cost. The 212th and Master Kenobi are going to stay in Theed and provide support if needed. We're to go through the swamplands and forests to clear them out." Ahsoka explains.

"I hate swamps. Blasters will be hell to keep clean."

"I can believe that Jesse. See you later." Ahsoka says as she enters the lift to the bridge.

EARTH

CHICAGO

MARCH 2545

Rex was woken up as the taxi pulled up infront of a tall appartment complex. The complex has a hotel on one side and a parking garage on the other.

[Here we are Liutenaunt.]

"You sure this is the right place Melissa?" Rex asks as he puts on his white officers hat, black HUD glasses, and grabs Melissas card from a port in the taxis dash.

He then places the card into his personal comm, or more commonly known as a 'chatter'. Rex's was a military grade device with a wireless ear piece and watch that doubled as a personal comm-pad.

[Yes sir. Coordinates are correct, just tripple checked.]

"Ok then. What floor is the appartment on?" Rex asks as he places his coat into his ruck and slings his ruck over onto his right shoulder.

[Seventh floor, room 26. Parking spot is number A-26.]

"Thanks." Rex says as he walks through the front doors of the tower.

As he walks into the foyer, Rex almost takes an involuntary step back. The foyer is completely open with shops on both sides of another set of doors leading out onto a very busy and bustling beach. A bar is on the right side of the foyer. Girls in swimsuits, businessmen, police, and others move throught the foyer, going about thier own business.

"Holy crap..."

[I agree a thousand fold.]

"Where's the elevator?"

[Checking the schematics...okay, elevators are between a cafe and a swimwear shop one hundred fifty-five feet to your left. I've downloaded a waypoint to your HUD.]

A small, grey arrow pops up in the far corner of his HUD. The HUD is set up with light grey/silver highlights around the shapes of an all transparent motion tracker in the upper left corner, compass in the lower left, weapon stats in the upper right, and TAC-COM channel display in the lower right.

"Got it. You had mentioned something about a parking space earlier, what am i going to use that for?"

[You apparently own a navy blue civillian model of the Warthog, which is in the parking garage next door as well.]

"Nice." Rex says as he moves through the crowd to the elevators.

He steps aboard one and takes it up to the seventh floor. When the elevator hits the seventh, he exits and looks for his apartment. After a few minutes of directions from Melissa, he finds it, and opens the door after having his DNA scanned and approved by a wall-mounted sensor.

As he walks in, he can't believe what he finds. The apartment had a lakefront view, was already fully furnished, had a fair sized balcony, was two levels high, and had an AI friendly system. He taps Melissas AI chip on a holo projector and she pops up in a tank top and shorts.

[What?] Melissa asks as she finds her new handler staring at her.

"The last i checked, you were in a uniform, not in a tank top and jeans."

[I am different than other Smart AI's Rex, i can change my 'clothing' to what and when i want to.] She explains as Rex takes his coat out of his ruck and hangs it up on a coat rack. Rex then starts looking around his new appartment with Melissa comenting on each room.

The first floor has a small kitchen/bar, large entertainment center with a double door in a large glass window leading to a balcony, wall-mounted flat screen TV (Simmilar to one in ODST) in the entertainment center, and a bathroom behind the kitchen. The top floor had a master bedroom with a full sized bathroom, an office, and two other bedrooms.

Rex walked into the office and found a data-pad that was turned on sitting on the wooden desk infront of a large window facing out towards the beach. He unplugs it and picks it up. He swipes the screen and a message pops up.

\Hope the appartment is up to your standards. Had to pull a few strings to get it completely done within a month. GADM LTH./

[You know Lord Hood!?] Melissa asks.

"Yeah, had to report to him after some missions i led."

[What are you going to do for the rest of your leave?]

"Take a look around the city and see what it is like." Rex says as he heads back down stairs after grabbing his M6C and a hoilster from his ruck that was now on the floor at the foot of his bed. He taps Melissas AI chip on a display and places it back inside his comm-pad as he puts his hat back on as well as his tactical glasses.

5. Chapter 5

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIZISM WANTED. READER OPINIONS ARE VALUED AND MAY IMPACT THE STORIES DEVELOPMENT. PLEASE REVIEW!

2 UNSC/COVENANT YEARS ARE ONE 'YEAR' FOR STAR WARS

L-COM - Logistics Command

CSH- Combat Support Hospital/field hospital

GNR RESOLUTE AND NEGOTIATOR

NABOO

ABOVE THEED

MARCH 2 ABG

Ahsoka looked out the side of the gunship that was on it's way to the palace in the center of Theed. She had spent a lot of time meditating recently and communicating with the Daughter. Her connection with the force was slowly growing and expanding. She was able to do this by assuming it woud be the thing Rex would have wanted her to do.

But, she would never let another take Rex's place in her life or be in a position where he had been. The gunships touches down in the large plaza infront of the Royal palace allong with a few AT-TE tank-carriers and troop transports from the Negotiator. Royal Naboo Malitia and Naboo Royal Gaurd members were preparing a defence allong the plaza with anti-aircraft guns, e-web heavy-repeater positions, and turning buildings into fortresses allong the major routes to the palace.

She watches as Padme Amidalia, the Senator from Naboo, walk up to her Master and Master Kenobi. Sensing that she wasn't needed, Ahsoka turns to Fives, Cody, and the other high-ranking clone officers and starts giving them orders.

"Master Kenobi, Anakin. Nice to see you again. I wish it was under different surcumstances though." Padme says.

"So do we Senator. How long have you known of this treaty?" Obi-wan asks.

"We contacted the GAR and GNR as soon as we had gotten word."

"How large is this clan?" Anakin asks.

"They are the second largest and current minority in the Gungan political structure, from what Jar-Jar told me." Padme says.

"What about the queen?" Kenobi asks.

The queen has been evacuated to a secure location allong with her Royal advisors."

"The 501st and myself will clear out the swamps. The 212th with Master Kenobi will help defend the city." Anakin explains.

"That sounds like a plan." Padme says.

Padme walks up to Anakin after they leave.

"Who is that other Jedi Ani? The one in the cloak."

"That is Ahsoka."

"Oh my. I wold have never guessed. Why is she in robes and a cloak now?"

"Rex died a month ago. She's taking his loss hard. She doesn't even act like she did before he died."

"How did Rex die? I mean, he seemed practically invincible!"

"He had taken cover behind some sort of device and a rocket hit it. All that was left were his melted and burned ID tags."

"Who's in command now of Torrent then?"

"Fives is Captain now. You better get to cover, Greivous should be arriving soon with plenty of droids."

EPSILON INDI SYSTEM

UNSC PARIS-CLASS FRIGATE

APRIL 2545

Rex's leave had been over for about a full week and a half. Johnson hadn't met him at the designated RV at the spaceport, so he had to leave Chicago without him. Then he learned what his orders were from Melissa. He was to go to Harvest and help train the local colonial malitia. Apparently, ONI hadn't been done with the repirations from Tribute after all. As the Paris-class frigate docked with the Utgard, Harvests capitol city and crown jewel's, space elevator and spaceport. Due to the fact that the spaceport was only for cargo freighters, he would have to ride down to the surface in the elevator.

Melissa had told him the current weather conditions and season on the planets surface before he had left the ship. Hot and humid with a chance of a light mid-day rain. Since he didn't want to roast in his stuffy dress uniform, he put on a set of BDUs and rolled the sleeves up to his elbows and had already put on his armor and had his MA5D secured in a case, but, in addition to his MA5, a short-barrel M45E shotgun with a colapsable stock in another case was also strapped to

the side of his bag. As usual, he had his field-cap and black glasses on. His M6C was also holstered on his right side.

Rex knew speed, being well armed, and light was key in a military outpost in the outter regions of a territory, so he only took the bare minimum. Two sets of clean BDUs, his dress uniform, rifle, shotgun, sidearm, tactical knife, usual combat loadout of ammo, helmet, hygene kit, three MREs(meal ready to eat) max, a 'camel' water pack, med-kit, mess kit, and two canteens. His helmet was secured on the top of is backpack by a duo of clips and straps. He also had a pair of tan, finger-less, tactical gloves.

[Do you always pack this light Rex?] Melissa asks, curious to why her handler would pack so lightly, yet be so heavily armed.

"Most of the time. When you're in the field, being fast, light, and well armed is key. Take only what you need and nothing else. For me, that's two extra BDUs, dress uniform, weapons, helmet, hygene kit, water, mess kit, and a few MREs to be on the safe side."

[But we're not in a hostile zone right now.]

"Yes, but, we are on one of the planets farthest from a major UNSC instalation, mainly Reach, which means..."

[Any help, if needed, is several days travel in slipspace away. Now i get it.]

"Good. Where's our ride to the base?"

[Modified green and black civillian Warthog with the Harvest Parliment seal on the doors sitting out front the main doors.]

Rex walks past the security checkpoints, passes the baggage claim, and walks out the front door. A long line of blue, yellow, green, and black taxis are lined up. A Warthog is parked a ways down the line with a UNSC flag on the drivers side of the front bumper and the flag of Harvest's Parliment on the passenger side. Rex walks down the line and hears shouting.

"This is for pickup only! Move that piece of crap jarhead!" A voice shouts.

Rex sees a cabby arguing with a Marine with Gunnery Sergeant stripes next to the hog.

"I am picking somebody up, and when they arrive, then i'll get out of YOUR parking spot. Ok?" Says the Sergeant slow and calmly.

"Move that piece of shit now before i move it for you!" Shouts the cabby.

Rex immedeately starts to double time it and sets his hand on his M6C's grip.

"What in the hell is going on here?!" He shouts as he gets within ten feet.

The Gunnery Sergeant whips around and snaps to attention as he sees the silver bar of First Liutenaunt on his cap.

"Oh wonderful! Another fucking jarhead!" As the cabby stands to the left of the Sergeant as he sees Rex's BDU.

Then Rex recognizes the Gunny. Nolan Bryne from his old squad. Bryne's memory also clicks and fires. Rex tips his head up and over to the left. Bryne swings around and cold-cocks the cabby in the chin, launching him onto the cab's hood. The cabby looks up dazed and realizes he had insulted a Marine officer as he sees the single silver bar on his hat.

The cabby quickly scrambles over the hood and gets into his cab and floors the accelerator, peeling off. As he does so, he catches the attention of Harvest's finest, who, in turn, peel off behind the blue and lime green taxi with siren screaming.

"Nice right Bryne."

"Yeah, got good at it when I was in recovery. A whole month in a hospital on Reach, no thanks to that damn bomb." Bryne says calmly.

"If you have a problem with me Gunny, you better say it now and get it out of your system before we get to the base." Rex says, perfectly calm and collected as he looks into the five foot eight Irish Gunny's impenetrable steel blue eyes.

"Nah, I have no problem with you LT. Just somebody else."

"Good, now let's get to this militia base so we can get settled in."

"We? I was told I was to pick you up, not anybody else."

[I'm offended a little. Can I tear into his personal database?] Melissa says as she pops up on Rex's wrist-mounted tac-pad dressed in a Marine BDU.

"...Ok, now that's different. How in the hell did you get your hands on a Smart AI sir?"

"Melissa here was assigned to me by somebody way up in the chain." Rex says as he climbs into the 'hog's passenger seat as Bryne takes the wheel and pulls out of the line of taxis. Melissa pops up on the dash just above the tac-com radio, which was where a standard civilian vehicle music radio would have been.

[So, how big is the militia, Gunny?]

"Right now it's on a few local judiciary police. The rest are arriving in four days. Most are dock workers, farmers, and some random civies. All together, we'll have about two and a half platoons worth of militia." Bryne explains.

"Am I in charge or is somebody else?" Rex asks.

"A Captain Ponder is in total command from what I understand. He's already at the base." Bryne says.

[Well, that just leaves me out and in the cold then.] Melissa

says.

"Not really." Rex says.

[How?]

"Target-hunter sims. Monitor how good the Malitia is against two SpecWarf Marines in war games."

"You serious LT? They won't stand a chance!" Bryne says.

[Unless you train them to act like proper Marines. Then they may win.] Melissa replies.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

MARCH 2 ABG

As they move through the swamps, Ahsoka couldn't help being on edge. The Naboo swamps were notorious for sinkholes, quicksand, poisonous swamp gasses, carnivorous preditorial amphibious reptilians, and rapidly changing water levels. Then there was also the added danger of CIS Commando droids, the hostile Gungan clan, and other hostiles that may not want to be found hiding in the swamp.

A fairly loud splash reaches her ears and whips around with her saber in her hand but not lit. She turns just in time to see two clone troopers helping another out of a water-filled hole. The troopers blue and white armor is now covered in muck and thier blasters barrel is more than likely filled with water. This is confirmed when the trooper pongs his DC-15S at the ground and a fair ammount of water and mud slide out.

"Get that weapon cleaned out rookie, no need for a jammed weapon." Says Jesse as he walks by.

"Yes Sergeant." Says the trooper as he detatches the barrel of the weapon and shakes the rest of the muck out of it.

"Did i mention they're also very clumsy?" Jesse asks.

"No, i don't believe you did." Ahsoka says.

"You ok sir?"

"Sorta."

"It's Rex, isn't it."

"Yeah, first combat mission without him here."

"I know. It will be different. But, as long as we remember and honor him, he'll be right along with us."

"Yeah, he will."

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

MALITIA BASE

As the two Marines had drove down the four-lane highway to the base, the sun had started to set and the four other planets in the Epsi Indi system had started to shine in the darkness. Harvest was different than most of the other UNSC worlds. Harvest's summer was in swing while Earth and Reach were beginning the late summer and early fall months. The planet also had no moon or celestial body close or big enough to be classified as one.

They exit the highway and start down a newly constructed gravel road with wheat and grain on each side of the road. As they near the road's end, it opens up into a large clearing where a flagpole, a med-bay, mess hall, armory, four barracks, a CP, a PT course, firing range, and a cleared out area for a motor pool.

As the headlights of the 'hog swing around the flagpole, Rex smells a Sweet Williams cigar and sees a man sitting on stairs in front of the CP. The figure stands up and Bryne stops the 'hog. Rex hops out and grabs his MA5 case and backpack from the rear storage area and places Melissa's card back into his tac-pad. Bryne heads off to the motor-pool and parks the hog.

Rex then turns and salutes the man as he walks over from the steps. A street lamp above flickers and turns on. The man has a buzz cut, salt-and-pepper hair, was possibly in his late fifties, and had his right arm missing.

"Sir."

"At ease son, no need for saluting around here until Monday. I'm Captain Ponders, you must be Xanders, correct?"

"Yes sir, but most call me Rex or Rich."

"Need help with your bags?"

"Nah, got all I need right here."

"Travel light, first to fight."

"Yes sir. By the way, where's the rest of the 'hogs?"

"Eh...some dumbass in logistics sent us a full CSH instead of 'hogs. The one you came in on is the only one we got besides a Mongoose and that's in the shop being repaired. The rest of the 'hogs should arrive within the next day or so. You and Bryne will go and get them when they arrive. L-COM said we could keep the CSH."

"Which platoon am I in command of?"

"Well, that's the problem, a Gunny is arriving to take first, Bryne has been promoted to Gunny and has second. I was supposed to take first and you were supposed to take second. But, due to my disability, I'll be in the CP most of the time doing paperwork and reports, which means that..."

"I'm CO when we're not at base."

"Exactly. Your bunk is in the CP. Follow me Rex, and we'll get you settled in."

6. Chapter 6

YOU ALL KNOW WHAT TO DO BY NOW. FINISH READING THE CHAPTER, START TYPING IN THE LITTLE BOX AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE, AND CLICK SEND. A FEW INTERESTING IDEAS HAVE COME IN THAT I MAY PUT INTO THE STORY. KEEP REVIEWING, AND THE STORY WILL CONTINUE.

DU- dress uniforms/dress blues

VTOL- vertical take off and landing

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

MALITIA BASE

APRIL 2545

The first day on Harvest was pure madness for Rex, Bryne and himself had been running around what seemed like the entire planet trying to locate the 'hogs for the Malitia. Melissa had finally located the 'hogs at a cvillian port that had recieved a delivery of HC1500 cargo trucks and Spades. They were mostly troop transports and a few recon's with M41 HMGs, then there was also an unexpected bonus, a Pelican dropship with a three man crew had been assigned to help move the 'hogs to the base and be stationed there and train along with the malitia.

But, in order for the Pelican to locate the base, a GPS beacon had to be placed at the base. This was nessecary to reduce the ammount of fuel burnt and maximize the effeciency of the deliveries. As Rex turns the 'hog down the drive, a blue and green taxi rolls past, leaving the base.

"Must have visitors." Bryne says.

[We do, i'm picking up two aditional nural implant signatures at the base.]

"Must be the medic and other Gunny." Rex says as he pulls the 'hog up to the steps of the CP.

"I'm going to go see who's our two newest friends are LT."

"I'll be around in a few, just need to tell the Captain that we've found the 'hogs." Rex says as he hops out of the 'hog.

Rex enters the CP and finds Captain Ponders working on his prothsetic arm. He looks up as he hears the screen door shut.

"Find the 'hogs?"

"Yes sir. Some dumbass sent them with a shipment of civie HC1500's and Spades. Most are transports and recons with M41's. We also got

something else."

"...What else did we get besides the 'hogs?"

"A Pelican with a three man crew."

"A Pelican? Seriously?"

"Yessir, it's going to be bringing the 'hogs to the base and is going to be based out of here as well."

Then the unmistakeable sound of a brawl breaks the silence.

[We got a fight in enlisted barrack Alpha!] Melissa shouts through Rex's comm.

Rex sprints out of the CP and runs full speed towards alpha barrack and burst through the door. In the center of the barrack, he sees Bryne with who appeared to be Johnson in a headlock. He immediately speed walks up and hits Bryne right on the left side of the face with a left hook, making him drop Johnson. Rex tosses Bryne accross the barrack, making him crash onto a bare metal and spring cot.

"What in the hell is wrong with you Bryne?!" Rex shouts, berating the stunned, bruised, and bleeding Gunny.

"Jesus..." Rex looks up and sees another person dressed in a naval uniform holding a boot like a club staring at a tooth on the floor.

"You better wear that boot or have mine up your ass, Navy." Rex orders.

The Petty Officer looks up and drops the boot onto the floor.

"Yes sir." The Petty Officer First Class says.

Johnson gets up from the floor gasping for breath.

"You doing good Johnson?"

"Yes...{gasp}...sir."

Then the screen door opens and slams shut again as Ponders walks in.

"You got this under control Xanders?"

"For now, Captain. Had to knock Bryne's jaw to get these two to stop." Rex answers.

"Anything you two want to sort out Bryne, Johnson?" Ponders asks.

"No sir." Johnson says, his voice hoarse and wheezy.

"Sir, no sir." Bryne replies as he rubs the left side of his face as he gets up.

"Good. Now, after you get cleaned up, you can help the flyboys with

the 'hogs and arrange the equipment arround the base. Petty Officer Healy could also use some help with orginizing the med-bay." Ponders orders as he turns and leaves.

Bryne gets up and also leaves, heading to barrack bravo, second platoons barrack. Rex turns twards the Petty Officer, who appeared to be the bases Corpsman.

"You the Corpsman?"

"Yes sir, Petty Officer First Class Healy."

"Go get a med-kit from the med-bay. Looks like you have your first two clients."

"Sure thing LT."

"You still want to bunk in here?" Johnson asks Healy.

"If i go over there, he'll kill me in my sleep!" Healy says with a grin as he walks off to the med-bay.

"What were you and Bryne fighting about?"

"Me not taking the shot at Tribute."

"That's what i thought. When i arrived, i assume that he would have picked a fight with me if i wasn't above first shirt (first sergeant)."

"That would not have been good...for Bryne that is." Johnson says with a smirk.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

MARCH 2 ABG

Anakin, Ahsoka, and Torrent had been slogging thier way through the muddy, hot, and humid swamps. The day had been uneventful so far. The company had found the ruins of an ancient walled compound that was overgrown with plants, whose buildings were mostly rubble. Anakin had decided the structure would be a perfect forward operating post and firebase for the duration of the mission.

Ahsoka flips down her cloaks hood and leans against the side of a fallen statue ovegrown with weeds and moss. Fives removes his helmet and flops to the ground beside her.

"Ugh, i HATE swamps." Ahsoka says as she rings out water from the bottom half of her cloak.

"So does most of the company...including myself." Says Fives as he points his DC-15S carbine towardsthe ground and cleans out the barrel with a cleaning rod.

"Clean your weapons troopers! Make sure there is nothing inside the barrel, unless you want it to turn into your own personal pipe-bomb!" Ahsoka half warns and half orders.

Almost instantly, every single Spaarti trooper pull out thier kits and begin cleaning thier weapons as what seems like one person. Almost none of the troopers had the DC-15A rifles, mainly DC-15S carbines were being used.

This was due to the A models inconviniently long barrel that would not be able to be wiielded in the close quarters of the forest and swamps they were currently in. Only a few had the A model, and those were cut-down and were used by the companies six sniper-scout/recon teams. The teams consisted of three troopers each. One on the rifle, one spotting targets, and another watching the others backs.

These teams were scattered around the perimeter of the ruins, scanning for any movement. Some of the troopers take the oprotunity and eat a few dry ration cubes. These cubes are tasteless, are about as big as a persons thumb, and contain the exact ammount of nutritional needs of a trooper to sustain themselves for several hours to a day after full digestion. Each trooper carries enough to last at most a month in the field.

Seeing some of the veteran the troopers eat a few cubes, Ahsoka takes out a small packet and eats part of her rations before placing it back into a poutch on her belt. She wraps herself up in her cloak inside of a mostly intact structure as the swamps daytime temp of eighty to nintey degrees falls to mid to lower sixties and high fifty degree night. Fives, Jesse, and Kix were also in the structure with a glo-heat lamp, officially making the structure the CP for the company for the duration of thier op.

"The Commander sure has changed alot recently." Kix says.

"We all have, Kix." Says Fives.

"I know that Fives, but the Commander changed more than all of us put together."

"That she has Kix. Even more than you realize." Jesse says.

"What do you mean Jesse?" Fives asks suspiciously.

"I delivered a hand written letter to her from Rex. One that shouldn't be delivered. Anyway, i had set the letter on her bed and went to the med-bay for my arm. After i was fixed up, i went to see if she had returned to her room or not. So i knock on her door, she let's me in, and, when i saw her, it looked like she had been crying about something."

"What are you implying Jess?" Kix asks.

"Rex and the Commander may have been in a relation." Jesse replies.

"Well, it's time for lights out boys." Fives says as he dims the glo-heater.

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

MALITIA BASE

MAY 2545

It had been about half a month since the recruits for the Malitia had arrived at the base for training. The Pelican's crewmembers, Warrant Officer Fifth Class John Peterson, Warrant Officer First Class David 'Dan' Walters, and Crew Chief Stanley Daniels had requested a cement landing pad be constructed for their Pelican. Ponders approved the plan and, within a week, the entire Malitia had the pad built to the exact regulation specs of a standard pad at any UNSC airfield with VTOL craft such as the Falcon, Hornet, and Pelican.

Rex was leading first platoon back into the base from their first ten kilometer run out and back of the base along the Gladshiem Highway. This was the first time doing the run with 25 kilogram rucksacks, full armor, helmet, and weapon after two weeks of doing routine PT along the route with very light packs with minimal equipment, no armor, and no rifle. As the platoon reaches the flapole in the center of the base, the recruits drop like flies to the ground. A few are able to stay on their feet after letting the packs drop to the ground with their simulated MA5's.

The simulated MA5's are metal and plastic models of the MA5 with a full 32 round clip. The weight, size, and dimensions were roughly the same as the real rifles. Rex had jogged the entire route with his M45 shotgun, pistol, rifle, and all the equipment he had brought along to Harvest with the exception of his hygiene kit, which was replaced with several plastic water bottles that the rest of the platoon might need.

A recruit who had dropped his pack on the ground had his hands on his knees and was bent forward, panting. His boots looked like they were not tied tightly. Rex knew the recruit would have blisters.

"You ok Jenkins?" Rex asks.

"Yesir, just tired."

"Here, drink it slow." Rex says offering a water bottle

"Yes sir." Jenkins says, standing up straight, unscrewing the lid, and taking a single, fair sized gulp.

"Got another pair of bad feet over here!" Rex shouts in Healy's direction, who was tending to another recruit's foot.

"That makes four! Able, Dass, and Jackson!" Healy shouts back across the circle drive as he bandages one of the paunchy recruit's feet while they sit there and take small gulps of water from personal canteens and water bottles.

"I think they wore clean through their socks!" Walters shouts across the drive as he helps Healy with the three exhausted recruits.

The few recruits that heard the airmen's remark who hadn't lost their breakfast and humor chuckled silently. Then Rex heard the chanting call of a cadence, signaling second platoon and Brynes' arrival back at base.

"Here comes Bryne." Johnson says as he slings his MA5C as he helps a few of the exhausted trainees.

Then Rex hears the CP screen door creak open and slam shut. He turns and sees Captain Ponders walk out with his sleeve pinned to the side of his BDU shirt.

"Attention on deck!" Bryne shouts as second platoon comes into the drive.

"At ease, did you like your stroll?"

Sir, yes, sir." Some of the men say.

"I think they could go another ten kilometers sir." Rex says loud enough for the recruits to hear.

"As i said, did you like your stroll?"

"Sir, yes, sir!" The entire seventy-two member malitia shout.

"I deffinetly heared that!" Says Ponders as he walks up to Rex and Johnson.

"What's the plan for this afternoon?"

"Thought we might get them some time at the range." Rex says.

"Bryne will have to babysit first, we have a date." Ponders says.

"Sir?"

"Summer Solstice Celebration at the Parliment. Govenor has invited myself and two others."

"Which just so happens to be the Liutenaunt and myself, right?" Johnson asks.

"Well, i really don't have any other choice. It's either one of you two, Healy, or..." Ponders says as he points at Bryne who was cussing while berating a recruit who had thrown up on his boots.

"I understand fully sir." Rex says.

"It's also formal. Ladies in dresses and such, so wear your DUs. Get cleaned up so we can get going."

7. Chapter 7

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIZISM WANTED! NO NEGATIVE
REVIEWS/COMENTS!

HARVEST

GLADSHEIM HIGHWAY

MAY 2545

As Avery drives down the highway, he couldn't help wondering why three SpecWarf operators had been taken from the front lines and assigned to train a Malitia instead of continuing the fight in Epsi Eri. He also couldn't help but wonder why the LT always had a pistol holstered on his person wherever he went. The Liutenaunt, or Rex as he preferred to be called, was in the passenger seat while the Captain was in the back.

The ride had been silent. This fact was deafening and was 'killing' the Gunny. That is until the Captain spoke up.

"Liutenaunt, Gunny, you two mind explaining the fact that i have three active SpecWarf Marines training Malitia that were taken straight from the front?" Ponders asks.

"...I was hoping that you would explain that to us sir." Avery replies.

[Rex and myself have come up with a theory, right Rex?] Melissa replies, popping up on the dash in a UNSC Marine Corps dress uniform with a skirt and hat.

"That is correct. It could be repercussions from the Tribute Jim Dandy incident."

"I heard about that. Over thirty civilians dead and six Marines." Ponders says.

"Yeah, and i thought we had left the Innies behind us!" Johnson says.

"So did i, until you three showed up."

"Sir?" Avery and Rex ask simultaneously.

"Ninth Marine Expeditionary Force, twenty first division, first battalion. Lost my arm in '35 trying to get Watts second. Guys father-in-law pulled a grenade and put it around his daughters neck. I knew it was a ruse, but a sniper team didn't think so and shot. Guy hits the floor with no head, grenade as no pin, that's how i lost my arm. Also was sent from Liutenaunt Colonel back to Captain."

When Rex heard the name Watts, he immediately sat straighter and his neutral expression turned into a scowl. He also mumbled some choice words.

"You look like you have a grudge out Liutenaunt." Avery says.

"Yes i do Johnson."

"Mind sharing?" Ponders asks.

"I met Watts about three months ago. The wrong way. Used to be recon and intel, Section three, until i was caught and that bastards men got me. He questioned me while his men kicked the shit out of me. Just a day after he left, a four-man team from S-three blew down the door and dragged me out. Then i was sent to SpecWarf." Rex explains.

"You're ONI?" Avery asks.

"No, i'm a Marine. Stock, cut, and blood. I was with HIGHCOM's SpecWarf. I was at thier disposal for the majority of my career." Rex says as they pull into the parliments curved drive and park the 'hog close to the doors.

Rex puts on his officers hat and places Melissa into his wrist-pad as he usually did and followed the Captain through the front doors with Johnson behind him. The lobby was packed with partygoers. Men in pastel, seersucker suits, and women in ruffled, scoop-necked gowns. As they walked through the lobby twards the granite stairs up to the ballroom to find the Govenor, Rex noticed the stares and gawks of the majority of the partygoers. Several that are close enough to see his uniform in detail pale a shade when they see a symbol on his right breast pocket that had a black skull with two crossed MA5 rifles with a sword going point down behind the skull. The symbol of a Marine highly trained for the most dangerous type of missions.

"Must be the first leathernecks these people hae seen." Johnson mutters to Rex.

"...Or not." Rex says as a group stares at them with cold and despiseful looks.

"Nils Thune. You must be Captain Ponders." Says a large man at he top of the stairs in a red and white stripped outfit.

"An honor to meet you Govenor." Ponders says as he salutes and shakes the mans outstretched hand.

"May i introduce you to two of my men. Liutenaunt Richard Xanders and Gunnery Sergeant Avery Johnson." Ponder says.

"Xanders, Johnson, how do you two think of our planet?" Thune asks.

"Well, it's a lot better than the planet's i've been to within the past year." Rex says.

"What about you Johnson?"

"A lot like home. Chicago Industrial Zone."

"Well, i'm a Minnesota man myself! Most of the people here are from the Midwest. Soil went bad and we all moved out here. Follow me gentlemen!"

Rex and Johnson quickly fill the gap behind the Captain and Governer as they move through the packed ballroom to a large balcony overlooking the parliment gardens and the Utgard mall in the distance.

"Rol!" Thune yells, waving his hand.

A short, skinny, and balding man wades through the crowd twards the balcony.

"Rol Pederson, my Attorney General. He's the one who negotiated with the CA for a malitia."

"More like accept the fact that they think we need one." Just as the lawyer finishes, fireworks spring up, filling the gaps between the seven space elevators.

"Alright! Cover your ears folks!" The large Govenor warns.

The lights dim around Tiara and a bright flash envelops the central number-four strand. Not soon after, a shockwave hammers the mall, then the parliment, billowing the ladies dresses on the balcony.

"There's a reason we fire Mass Drivers in space, Govenor." Ponders says as they walk back inside

[We know that Captain Ponders, it's just another kind of entertainment.] Says a male AI dressed in a set of dirty pants, boots, and a dirty white t-shirt that appears on a projector near a wall with a group of children gathered infront of it.

"This is Mack, our Agricultural Operations AI."

[I was just about to tell a story. You may want to move your conversations to the saloon.] Mack says as an old-west style town pops up and a group of armed gunman run out of a bank while Mack switches his outfit into an old-west style with a long-coat, hat, and gun.

"Go and get yourselves some dance partners, and that's an order." Says Ponders as he follows the Governor.

"Well, follow me gentlemen." Says Pederson.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

MARCH 2 ABG

As the sun poked through the canopy of the swamps, Torrent Company was already on the move. Early the previous night, a recon unit had sighted a possible LZ(landing zone) for the prepitory unit for the main droid army in a clearing where two landing craft had toughted down and were deploying units, expanding the clearing, and constructing a base allong with some Gungan troops.

The plan was to hit the base before the enemy even knew what had hit them. Motars of various sizes would fire on major locations the base as the companies troopers who had Z6 rotary cannons, heavy repeaters, and the snipers would keep the enemies heads low while the rest of Torrent would move in and surround the enemy base and try to capture the rouge Gungan clan-master. Ahsoka, Fives, Jesse, and the non-sparrti troopers move into position around the clearing. A trio of troopers set up a light-mobile heavy repeater, or L-MHR, position on Ahsokas left while a sniper team sets up to her right and a makeshift CP is set up behind her.

Her Master was on the other side of the clearing with Appo and the Sparrti half of the company. Knowing her Master, he would more than likely charge headlong into the base in a frontal charge. Which would inflict massive casualties on the already de-moralized and

undermanned company.

"What's the plan if this goes to the Hutts?" Jesse asks.

"We improvise, fall back to the base, contact General Kenobi, and get reinforcements." Ahsoka says.

"Just another day of being in the 501st." Fives says with dry humor.

Blasterfire erupts from the other side of the clearing and an alarm sounds from inside the half-constructed base.

/Covering fire, covering fire!/ Ahsoka hears her master yell over the comm.

"Master, what's going on over there!?"

/We've been spotted and are taking heavy fire from that base!/
/

/They're behind us!/ A trooper shouts a warning over the open comm.

Then the comm goes dead and the sound blasterfire increases across the clearing. Several armored Gungans and a platoon sized group of droids rush out of the base and towards the growing firefight across the clearing.

HARVEST

PARLIMENT BUILDING

MAY 2545

As Rex and Johnson follow Pederson through the crowd back to the balcony, Pederson couldn't help but talk about the planet's daily operations, exports, and history. Then the subject of the mass driver and one of Harvests two AIs, Sif.

Sif was the planets monitor of ship traffic, freight, and all goods leaving and entering the colony. During instalation, a power issue occured and Mack had launched a piece of equipment into orbit with the driver to fix it. But, the equipment almost hit Sifs data core in the process.

"...and that's why Sif is not here tonight. She always make an excuse not to be here when the driver fires."

"That's quite an accusation you are dishing out, your honor." Says a woman in a silver and black dress as she walks up to the Marines and the lawyer.

"I was refering to the Sif-mass driver incident." Pederson says.

"And if i recall correctly, my department mandated that it be shut down." The woman says.

"But, that would violate the CAs demand that we have one that is

operable. And besides, it's good entertainment." Pederson replies.

"That is a good point." The female says.

"I'm forgetting my manners. Gunnery Sergeant Avery Johnson, Liutenaunt Richard Xanders, meet Representative Jilan al-Cygni, DCS. If you will excuse me, i have to go rescue Captain Ponders from our very talkitive govenor." Pederson says as he walks off.

As soon as the lawyer is far enough away, al-Cygni pulls out a personal comm-pad from her clamshell purse.

"48789-20114-AJ and 00101-75670-RX, correct?"

"...Say what?" Avery asks.

"Your serial numbers, right?"

"Yes ma'am." Avery answers.

"Both of you are former SpecWarf, CO and SNCO from the same unit, and were on Tribute." Jilan says.

"That's classified material." Avery says before Rex can say anything.

"I know." She says smiling.

"Oh wonderful." Rex says, huffing in annoyance.

"What?" Avery asks.

"Cut the crap and tell us what you want." Rex says.

"Ok then. Pirates have been hitting manned and unmanned cargo craft heading for Reach and Epsi Eri. I need your help to stop the ones who are doing it."

"But were DI's for the Malitia, not an anti-piracy force right now. So unless we see written and signed...orders...for..." Johnson says as al-Cygni hands Avery a folded piece of paper with sparsely detailed orders.

"One step ahead of you, Gunny." Jilan says as she turns her personal comm to showan image of herself in a jet-black ONI uniform with the silver oak leaves of Liutenaunt Commander on her uniformed shoulders.

"Well, now we know why we're here now." Rex says.

"We leave in three hours. Get back to the base, get Gunny Bryne and your gear, then meet me at Utgard spaceport."

8. Chapter 8

I THANK THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME THROUGH THE CURRENT PROBLEM WITH CHAPTER ONE RECENTLY.

THE RESULTS OF THE POLL ARE IN. I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW THE ADVICE OF SEVERAL OF MY FELLOW WRITERS AND I WILL RE-WRITE CHAPTER ONE AND POSSIBLY RE-FORM THE STORIES CHAPTER LAY-OUT. SO, UNTIL THEN, THE STORIES NEW CHAPTERS WILL BE ON HOLD.

OH, AND DON'T FOGET THOSE REVIEWS!

EPSI INDI

SPACE LANE

SOMEWHERE NEAR HARVEST

MAY 2545

Rex, Johnson, and Bryne had been briefed on the real reason that they were on Harvest by LTC(Liutenaunt Commander) al-Cygni. Several ships had been disappearing recently and it was to believed to be linked with the Innies in Epsi Eri trying to expand into Epsi Indi. The LTC had given the three Marines specilized equipment. Full body armor that was for a specilized unit called the Orbital Drop Shock Tropers, or ODST. The unit had been formed five years ago and was made up of veteran Marine, Army, and Navy SpecWarf unit members.

As thier name suggests, they drop from low orbit in one-man pods. The armor covered most of the body, had a rebreather/recycler for air supply, polarized visor for anti-glare and night operations, and was rated for use in the vaccum of space. But, Rex found several features that were familiar to him. The UNSC had apparently reverse-engineered his armor and helmet, and put some of the components into the newest model of the ODST armor, the Mark II, which is what they were equipped with.

Then there was a fair sized armory equipped with MA5 Carbines(MA5K) with silencers, the latest M6 pistol of the Misriah factory lines, the M6D, a few M6 series silencers, and then there was the select-fire BR55, the replacement for the semi-auto DMR. The BR55 had a sixty round extended clip, ACOG-style sight, and was chambered in the 9.5x40 Kurz round, which held about twice the power of a 7.62 FMJ(full metal jacket) round.

Johnson was armed with one of the M6D's with and a BR55, Bryne had one of the MA5Ks and a silenced M6D, Rex had opted to take his MA5D a snap a silencer into the threading in the rifles muzzle brake and his M6C. They were aboard al-Cygni's personal sloop which had the latest in tech from ONI aboard allong with a single Archer missile made to look like a harmless cargo container right accrost from and air lock.

Just a few minutes ago, the ship had lost atmos, gravity, and long-range comms durring disabling barrage from an unidentified ship. Now it was a waiting game to see if the pirates flinched first and poked thier heads into the cargo bay. As the three Marines were getting into position, a boring device on the end of hat could only be a boarding tube burned through the hull and stopped just inside of the ships hull.

Slowly, four figures emerged from the tube that was sealed off with some sort of energy shield that was simmilar to what would have been on a brig door in a Venator class cruiser. Immedeatly, Rex knew that

they were not human in any shape or form. They were avian and lizard-like, resembling a very short and skinny Trandosian, but with a beak and spines on the top of thier head.

All four had pressurized suits with clear facemasks with light blueish purple back lighting. Two of the four had some kind of sidearm shaped in a c with two green-glowing tips and a grip behind where the weapon was glowing. It appeared that the weapon also served as a lantern of sorts.

"Sir, we got contacts. Four and possibly more inside the bay. That are non-human. I say again, not humanoid in any way. Over." Rex says into his comm.

/...Are you saying we have xeno pirates attacking our ships?!/ The Commander asks.

/Yes ma'am, and it appears we have more coming through the tube./ Bryne says.

A humanoid in a pressure suit with a polarized air mask drifts in behind the four lizards. This being was armed with what appeared to be a high-power blaster pistol used by officers of the CIS special operations units.

/And it appears that this next guest is humanoid in stance and figure, but is not./ Johnson says.

"Commander, do we have a green light for engagement?" Rex asks, lining up his rifle to hit the humanoid in the legs.

/Take that humanoid and the leader of the lizards prisoner. I want answers. Green light./ al-Cygni replies.

"Line 'em up and knock 'em down!" Rex shouts over the comm as he starts firing his rifle and kicks of the wall, heading directly across the cargo bay to some rafters behind the boarders.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

MARCH 2 ABG

"Open fire!" Ahsoka orders. Instantly, the entire line of troopers open up on the unsuspecting group of droids and Gungans.

In mere seconds, the entire platoon of droids is wiped out, but, the Gungans charged the line, firing thier weapons blind and wildy at anything that moved. A few troopers had been hit in the arms and legs. Most were near misses, but two troopers ended up with holes in the center of thier t-visors and chests.

The Gungans had been stopped short of reaching the line. But now it was up to Ahsoka and the others to charge in, take the base, and rescue her Master and his troopers from certain death.

"Alright then, let's get this over with. Up and over troopers!" Ahsoka shouts.

Her entire unit jumps out of cover and under the surpressive fire of the L-MHRs and motars. The group jumps from stacks of wood, stumps, and large pieces of equipment towards the bases wide open front gate. Ahsoka, Fives, Jesse, and Kix reached the large gate first. In groups of twos and threes, the rest of the unit arrived.

Ahsoka leads the charge into the courtyard of the uncompleted base. The inside has deavticated construction and pit droids, a few troop transports, boxes and containers of varying sizes, and a single shuttle in the far right corner near a clump of large tents. Droids and enemy Gungan warriors start firing blaster rifles and pistols at the newly presented targets.

Ahsoka deflects a few bolts and charges into the cluster of enemies, cutting, slicing, and slashing. Torrent provides surpressive fire from whatever they can find that offers cover. Fives and Jesse lead a small team of troopers that go in behind thier commander. Within minutes, the entire base is cleared of hostiles. Durring the fight, the shuttle had taken off and had left the base.

"Jesse, take two squads and clear the base while we go rescue the General." Ahsoka orders.

"Yes sir." Jesse says as he grabs twelve troopers. Several Advancd Recon Force (ARF) troopers and the rest were a combination of snipers and some troopers armed with rockets, DC-15 carbines, and Z6 rotary cannons.

Ahsoka leads the rest of her troopers into the geneal direction of her Master and his troopers. As they close in. Distant blasterfire is heared and the group find the bodies of battle droids, commando droids, and clone troopers. Most of the troopers were in shallow defolades behind L-MHRs and other weapons.

A trooper with a vibroblade stuck in his chest is lying immobile next to a comm relay pack and a halved commando droid at his feet. Then a single commando droid charges at the group, firing a blaster carbine like a mere pistol. The entire group opens up on it and it is shredded by the bolts.

"Spread out and find Anakin, he's around here somewhere." Ahsoka says.

The troopers fan out and begin thier search for the missing General. Several minutes into the search, one of the tropers spot a shining cylindrical object in the tall weeds. A lightsaber.

"Commander! Over here!" Within sconds, he is surrounded by the majority of the search teams, Fives, and Ahsoka.

"Found this in the weeds sir." The trooper says as he holds up the lightsaber and hands it to Ahsoka.

"Sir, we have a blood trail!" Kix says as he takes his helmet off, sniffs, licks, and spits a substance he had on two of his gloved fingers onto the ground.

Ahsoka follows Kix as he follows the trail. It leads to what appeared to be a CIS transport ship wing leftover from the first invasion of

Naboo overgrown with plant life in a crater. A single white boot from a trooper is poking out from under the wing.

SPACE LANE

NEAR HARVEST

MAY 2545

As Rex crossed the lines of fire of the trio of armed boarders, firing his rifle as he went, green balls of what seemed to be plasma bolts fly past his head and impact the thick, double hull of the freighter, which starts to melt and cool rapidly at the point of impact.

The humanoid dove down the pressurized tube as soon as a burst from Rex nicks him in the leg and another burst from Johnsons general direction hit the unknown in the shoulder and arm. The wounded alien followed the humanoid after rapidly chattering what seemed like orders to the other three.

The trio charged towards Johnson and Bryne. Two went for Johnson while the other was firing at Bryne. Rex aimed just in front of one of the xenos Johnson was fending off and fires.

Ten seven point six-two by fifty-one milimeter armor-piercing high-explosive(AP-HE) rounds enter its head and torso, creating spurts of dark purple liquid and flesh explode inside of the creatures now ruptured pressure suit. The other was quickly dispatched by six rounds of fifty caliber magnum AP rounds from Johnsons M6D.

Rex turned and saw Bryne was now hand-to-hand with the last unknown inside thier ship. He knew he was too far off to land a shot that would not hit Bryne or help by throwing the creature off of Bryne by it's bulky suit.

"Johnson! Help Bryne, i'm going over to that other ship and take down those other two!" Rex says as he kicks off towards the boarding tube and enters the enemies ship. The first thing he noticed was that the ships inside was totally purple and dark blue. Then the wounded xeno fumbling to get it's weapon. Rex fired the rest of his clip, a total of twelve rounds, into it's torso. Then the humanoid leaped out of cover, firing it's weapon.

Rex slung his rifle aside and attempted to draw his M6C. But the humanoid covered the gap a little faster than Rex would have liked. It yelled and tackled him, causing his M6 to hit the ground just out of reach. Rex punched the creature in the chest and knocked it's blaster out of reach and threw it away from his enemy.

As they tossed and tumbled, Rex had it pinned when he saw it almost had his M6 in it's hand. He had only one weapon left. His six-inch grade-a titanium tactical knife in it's sheath on his left side. Moving fast, he drew the knife and slammed it down into the beings throat, twisted it, and brought the blade out at an angle. It quickly stopped moving and Rex reclaimed his M6 and fired five rounds into the beings body to ensure that it wouldn't get back up. He then proceeded to rip it's helmet of of it's head.

"What in the-!?" Rex shouts to himself.

The being was well known to him. It was a Weekway pirate. It's suit, weapon, and armor suggested that the CIS had advisors or some sort of military alliance with these other unknowns, which was not good at all for anybody.

/You ok LT!?!/ Johnson shouts over the comm.

"Yeah, i'm good. Just had to put dow...shi-!" Rex says as he sees the fatally wounded avian slip it's finger off of it's weapons trigger, letting a bolt melt through a door, causing nothing but flame to envelop his field of vision.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

APRIL 2 ABG

Ahsoka ran up and looked underneath the old wing. The only ones underneath it were about four dead troopers and three survivors. Those being Liutenaunt Appo and Sergeants Fox and Vil. Her master was not there.

"Where's the General?" Fives aks as Kix starts treating the three injured troopers.

"No idea sir. We got seperated. We holed up here for our strong point." Fox says

"When did you see him last?" Fives asks.

"Just after those droids opened up. We fell back to find a good place to return fire effectively. You already saw the results." Appo answers.

"Fek. Well, were back at square one. Half the company still operational with the General MIA. Again!" Says Coric, Torrents company sergeant.

"He'll turn up somewhere. In the meantime we'll distroy that base camp and lay a few traps. then we head back to base, report our findings, hole up, and wait for further orders." Ahsoka says.

In Theed, the situation had turned from good to the worst senario possible. A CIS fleet had arrived and opened fire on the Negotiator and Resoulute in orbit. The enemy ships had 'pushed' them away from the space over Theed and twards open space. Then they were forced to leave due to major dammage and a shortage of ammunition.

CIS troop carriers had landed in the large plazas and shuttle-ports to deploy thier loads. A single purple craft had been sighted hovering in one of the enemy LZs along with several wookiee-like creatures and high-ranking CIS officers setting up a command post.

To Commander Cody, the tall and very hairy creatures acted like they were observing the CIS and how they would attempt to take Theed. The only thing protecting Theed now were a ragtag Militia, his division,

and the mostly ceremonial Royal Guards. The 501st was not able to be reached due to the CIS jamming all com signals from being sent outside of the city.

General Kenobi was hoping that the Gungans under Boss Lyonie, the replacement for the now retired Boss Nass, would send troops to Theed to help drive the CIS out. But, Cody suspected that they would not. After all, mynocks of a feather, stay together.

9. Chapter 9

I APPOLIGISE FOR THE LONG WAIT FOR THE CHAPTER. SCHOOL HAS JUST ENDED FOR ME AND I HAD TO GO TO NORTHERN WISCONSIN FOR AN ANNUAL DOCTORS APPOINTMENT. DRIVING THE MAJORITY OF A MULTI-HOUR DRIVE IS NOT FUN.

IF YOU FIND ANY MAJOR ERRORS, SEND NOTIFICATION AS AN EMAIL. SUPPORT IS GREATLY WELCOMED. IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE STORY, EMAIL ME OR YOU WILL BE BLOCKED. FINAL. WARNING.

SWCW- Star Wars the Clone Wars

HARVEST SURFACE

UTGARD REACTOR COMPLEX

APRIL 2545

It had been three days since the unexpected contact with the unknowns. In that time frame, both squads had qualified for and had been issued MA5C assault rifles. A few had been given the MA5B assault rifle. The MA5C and B were the same cosmetically, but the MA5B had a higher rate of fire and a sixty-four round box magazine.

Even though it was an AR (assault rifle), it was classified as a squad automatic weapon, or SAW, in the UNSC Marine Corps and Navy. The MA5C had a slower rate of fire, a select fire switch, and a thirty-two round mag. The 5C had a longer range than the 5B. The 5C also had a system called picatinny rails. This system that had been standard on military rifles since the late 20th century allowed a soldier to place a forward grip, flashlight, or a grenade launcher under the barrel of the MA5D and C models. The MA5B had no rail, but had an attached bi-pod and fixed, angled forward grip for the gunners comfort while firing the weapon.

Only four men in the entire Militia would have grenade launchers on their 5Cs. Two per platoon. The only weapons with scopes available for use were the XBR55s that Militia Marksmen Jenkins and Critchley had, the smart-link scope on Rex's 5D, and Bryne and Johnsons BRs (battle rifle). The rest had angled fore-grips or flashlights on their rifles. Today was the day they were going to have a hunter-killer war simulation. It was going to be Johnson, Rex, and Bryne against the entire Militia. Captain Ponders and the Pelican pilots were going to monitor the war game from a 'hog near the bases gate under a tree.

They had fabricated a story that a DCS and CA delegation was arriving and they wanted security against any possible insurrectionist attack.

Even the Govenor was telling his board of advisors and some other government officials about the 'delegation'. While this was going on, Jilan had sent her ship back to Reach to alert HIGHCOM and FLEETCOM with a request for a fleet. She had no idea that Rex had already done so by having Melissa send a request to Lord Hood with full contact and combat reports with helmet-cam recordings. That had been two days ago.

Now Rex was moving through the tall wheat and prairie grasses in a shallow ditch along the side of the complex. He had hiked and crawled from a drop-off point from where the Pelican had dropped him off at to his present position. He knew Johnson was taking his position on the opposite side of the base as well as Bryne.

Then the signal was tripped. A modified taxi 'driven' by Mack slammed through the front gates and skidded to a stop as the trainees fired and hit it's windshield and engineblock. then a fireteam of overly curious trainees and the claymores inside did thier job and took down the entire unfortunate fireteam, coating them in tactical training round(TTR) red and pink paint. Then a large JOTUN combine operated by Bryne crashed into the compound. While the trainees were concentrated on the combine, Johnson took down a few from on top of a small hill.

Rex slinks under the fence through a hole and quietly take down a few trainees with single shots to the back of the hemet, leg, or torso. He keeps his rifle raised and looks around the corner. Brynes JOTUN was being coated in the red paint of TTR rounds. Then he heard an M6 firing. He looks on top of a building and sees Johnson take down one of his snipers. Then he saw Jenkins fire and hit Johnson in the back of the leg.

Rex saw four trainees moving twards the JOTUN in a small cluster firing at one of the three large tires. He lines up and fires the rest of his clip into the triad. They hit the ground hard, thier fatigues and armor locked up and stiff. Then Rex is hit in the right side of the chest and the leg by a burst from a trainee behind a cement 'Texas' barrier. That caused gravity to take him down in a not-so graceful fall to the cement drive.

"Cease fire! Cease fire! Trainees win thirty-four to one." Captain Ponders yells over the COM.

"You three almost had us LT." Says Chips Dubbo, a trainee in second platoons second squad, as he walks over and helps Rex up.

"Almost Dubbo, almost."

Rex leans against the nearby TTR coated taxi and notices Captain Ponders walking twards him with the pilots.

"That was one interesting war game." The Captain says.

"I can agree with you on that sir." Rex says.

"The 'delegation' just entered the outskirts of the system." Ponders says

"Great. Time to break out the chaingun and anvil IIs." Says W01C Walters.

"A frigate has also arrived from Reach and have taken up shop at Utgard elevator." Ponders says.

"What is the 'delegation' doing?" Chief Daniels asks.

"Holding position on the outskirts of the system. Ship is the size of a light Cruiser." Ponders says.

"How's the Govenor taking this?" W05C Peterson asks.

"He's not too happy about having, and i qoute, 'those space squids on my doorstep'. Al-Cygni is trying to find out who got the frigate here so fast." Ponders says.

"If she didn't send for it, then who did?" Walters asks.

"A Commander named Jacob Keyes told me HIGHCOM sent him out here for some sort of 'routine patrol'. Anyway, Cygni says it's time to tell them what's really going on." Ponders says as he gestures to the 'surviving' Militia trainees as they help the 'dead' and 'wounded' trainees get up and head to Healy's triage tent near the front gates.

As the Pilots walk off, Ponders stops Rex.

"Hold it. This Commander Keyes wants to talk to you ASAP. Why, i have no idea. Grab a 'hog and get to Utgard." Ponders orders before walking off.

NABOO

THEED

APRIL 2 ABG

The situation in Theed had deteriorated very quickly. More and more craft seemed to be landing every hour, deploying more and more droids. The second-most outer ring of the defence line was being battered almost non-stop by waves of battle droids trying to get to the palace. The first line had been defeated within the first three days. It was now day four of the battle for Theed.

The palace is one of the most important structures on Naboo. It houses the Queen, Senator, the Royal Advisors board, Royal Gaurd barrack, Treasury, and most of the cities municipal offices allong with the planet-wide parlimentary government. It was surrounded by forty-foot polycrete steel reinforced walls with a thrity-five foot steel and iron gate with the seal of the Royal Parliment in the center.

No word had been heard from the 501st in the swamplands since General Skywalker had informed General Kenobi about thier attack on a farily large LZ and partially built base. This had Cody on edge. It ment one of two things. The Seppies were jamming outgoing comm signals, or the entire 501st was wiped out.

But, he had more pressing maters to attend to. The city fighting was mostly hit-and run ambushes behind the enemy controlled parts of the city from underground tunnels allong with the main front that was set

up inside the large, stone buildings of the city. These buildings had chunks missing from the facades, burn marks on the walls, and some with holes from rockets and explosives.

The streets were littered with the burned and blasted out hulks of destroyed and damaged battle droids, impact marks from heavy weapons fire, and the rubble from collapsed buildings. The burnt out hulk of an AT-TE sits in the center of the street where it was disabled, used as temporary cover once, and is now being used as a barricade and marker for the motars in the palace gardens.

As usual, it was a waiting game to see if the Seppies would attempt another attack on the front line or try and find an alternate route around that section of the line and to the palace. To ensure that they weren't outflanked or bypassed and cut off, Cody had some of his troopers and Militia members place mines and rig traps. He also had some of his troopers inside the upper most floors of the palace with scoped DC-15A rifles.

"Looks like they're getting ready for another try." Says Boil, an ARF trooper and Sergeant in the 212th says as he scans the occupied part of the city with a pair of macro-binocs.

"Wonderful. Get charge packs distributed and grab a few rockets." Cody says as he orders two troopers to go get more ammo and a few RPS-6 rockets (used in SWCW).

/Incoming!/ A Militia member shouts as large, red bolts slam into a building.

/Tanks!/ A Royal gaudsman shouts as two AAT tanks roll from the roadway into the middle of the street with dwarf spider droids in support.

The CIS Commerce Guild dwarf spider droid had three known configurations. It could be a self-mobile motar, a light anti-armor unit, or a mobile heavy repeater unit. The anti-armor unit was, unfortunately, the most common unit in the field. The ones in front of the tanks were two motar and six anti-armor.

"And we have dwarf spider droids and AATs...wonderful!" A trooper nicknamed Jokster says.

"Stow it Jokster and fire that weapon!" Cody orders as he fires his DC-15s Carbine at the dwarf spider droids.

A trooper rushes up with a RPS-6, aims, and fires a smoke round at the front of the tanks and DSDs(dwarf spider droids).

"Reload and fire an HE round! That was smoke you bantha!" Boil shouts at the trooper.

/Smoke sighted, motars inbound. Hang! Fire!/ A trooper shouts over the com.

Twelve motars impact just in front of the AT-TE, knocking out four of the eight DSDs. Then the motar DSDs fire. The enemy motars arc up and drop right on top of a building occupied by Militia members and troopers. Then Cody watches in mute horror as an AAT barrel swings and is aimed right at his position and fires.

HARVEST

UTGARD SPACEPORT ELEVATOR

APRIL 2545

When Rex and walked in through the front doors of the spaceport, he was met by a cluster of what appeared to be civilian reporters. It seemed that everywhere he turned after he got back from a battle, reporters would flock in and would start bombarding him, his General, and Ahsoka with questions.

But these reporters were already contained by a squad of Marines led by a Staff Sergeant. Rex walks up and taps the Staff on the shoulder.

"What!? I'm kind of bus- sir!" The Staff says snapping a quick salute.

"At ease Staff. You know here Commander Keyes is?" Rex asks.

"Gate Alpha five. Sorry about earlier, just been one reporter after another. 'What's the Navy doing here', 'is there an Innies threat', and so on. I hate these details sir."

"So does everybody else. Your doing better than most. Keep up the good work." Rex says as he walks off towards the terminal gate.

As he gets closer to the gate, he notices groups of two to four Marines and Navy MPs(military police) at what seemed like makeshift checkpoints. As he reaches one of them, the Marines and MPs stop him.

"Sorry Lieutenant. Everybody has to be searched and scanned before they go past this point." A Marine Corporal says.

"What's your name Corporal?"

"Corporal Banks sir."

"Alright Corproal, you better make this snappy. I was ordered to get here ASAP by Commander Keyes, who, from what i'm told, is waiting for me just down this terminal." Rex says.

"Wait, you mean you're Lieutenant Xanders?" A Sergeant named Edward Buck asks as he walks up to the checkpoint.

Rex pulls out a black leather wallet from his combat vest and hands it to the Sergeant. Inside is the HIGHCOM coat-of-arms on one side and his military ID card on the other with his rank, security clearance, and serial number.

"...Ok then. Follow me Lieutenant." Buck says, handing the leather wallet back to Rex.

"Sorry about the chekpoint. The Commander doesn't want any uninvited guest carrying an unexpected and unwanted party gift to walk in." The Sergeant explains.

"I don't need an explanation Sergeant. I've seen this type of set up at Tribute. But that one was more complex and had a few UGVs with M5s and ARGUS scanners roaming around." Rex says.

"This part of the terminal was cleared out and the Commander made it a make shift CP and base. The control room is accrost from the elevator doors at the admin desk. The Commander should be back there somewhere." Buck says as he turns back towards the checkpoint.

Rex continues on and passes Marines in multiple shops with display shelves and large pieces of merchandise moved and two-man bunks set up, a restraunt reconfigured into a triage/med-bay set up, another restraunt left the same, but with a mess-hall sign at the entrance, and then, comically, a 'Shopsmart' with several, large, portable 'mini' armories set up in lines like a Marine could go shopping for an SMG to an M41 rocket. Then he reached the end of the terminal and the admin desk.

10. Chapter 10

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK MY FELLOW WRIGHTER KRUTYANK FOR ALLOWING ME TO UTILIZE SEVERAL MARINE ODST OCs OF HIS. THESE ODST MEMBERS WILL SHOW THIER HEADS AND RIFLES IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.

PLEASE REVIEW. PLEASE BRING ANY ISSUES WITH THE STORY TO MY ATTENTION VIA EMAIL/PM, NOT AS A REVIEW. NEGITIVE REVIEWERS WILL BE BLOCKED AND ALL GUEST REVIEWING CLOSED.

Civie- civillian/non-military

NABOO

THEED

APRIL 2 ABG

As Cody watched the red tank shell getting closer, he sees it move to the right a bit. Soon after, it screams past his building and impacts the third level of a building next door.

"That was a close one."

Cody whips around and sees General Kenobi behind him.

"General." Says Boil as he turns back and calls for a readjustment for the motars.

"Nice save sir. That nearly fried us into womp-rats!" Jokster says as he fires his DC-15A at the dwarf spider droid closest to thier position.

"Just thought i'd stop by and check how things were going up here." Kenobi says.

"Just holding the line until Yalauran comes back around, or Torrent shows up to relieve the pressure a bit." Cody says, casually.

In the Swamplands, Ahsoka and the surviving members of Torrent had regrouped at thier pre-established base of operations. The troopers

killed by the Seppie assault had been stripped of all useful equipment, weapons, ID tags, then buried.

"What's the plan now Commander?" Fives asks.

"I have no idea Fives. We should contact Master Kenobi and inform him of the situation." Ahsoka says.

"Morse! Bring up that radio!" Fives shouts.

A trooper who his name in morse code, a centuries old communication method, on his chestplate fast walks up to Fives and Ahsoka with a backpack-sized radio strapped to his back.

"You rang sirs?" Morse asks.

"Get General Kenobi on the line. We need to inform him of our current status and that General Skywalker is MIA." Ahsoka orders.

"Yes ma'am." Morse says as he flicks a switch on his left fore-arm and starts to send a message.

Then, surprisingly, he flicks another switch, changes a few numbers on a display, and starts tapping out morse code on a transmitter on his fore-arm pad.

"That's odd...i can't seem to get a signal acquired from anywhere within Theed." Morse says.

"Have you tried backup, E-ban, and civie channels and freq?" Jesse asks.

"Of course i did! I'm no fekking shiny fresh from Kamino. Everythings static and garbled transmissions. All transmissions are being jammed." Morse says.

"But are we being jammed, or is the 212th and Theed?" Kix asks.

"It's Theed, i'm able to send and revieve, but not recieve anything from the Theed area." Morse says, confirming that Theed was being jammed.

"What's the plan Commander?" Fives asks.

"First, we find Anakin, then we go and help out Obi-wan." Ahsoka says.

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

UTGARD SPACPORT

TERMINAL A-5

APRIL 2545

Behind the counter of the admin desk were several Ensigns and Petty Officers setting up portable computers, radios, and large tactical

display boards and holo-projectors. The elevator arrives at the bottom and several Marines and sailors exit and move large boxes of equipment out of the lift and move down the Terminal to it's destination.

As Rex nears the admin desk, a Petty Officer second class(PO2) looks up from his work and sees him approaching.

"Can i help you sir?" The PO2 asks.

"Yeah. I'm looking for a Commander Keyes. I was told he might be back here." Rex says.

"I'll need to see your ID card."

Rex takes out the leather wallet and hands it to the sailor.

"Uh...just one second." The Petty Officer walks over to where a Liutenaunt Junior Grade is, shows him his ID card, and gestures in his driection. Then the LTJG walks into an office behind the counter and the PO2 walks back over.

"Here's your ID, the LTJG will be back out in a minute." The PO2 says, handing Rex his ID and turning back to a console.

Then, after several minutes of waiting, the LTJG walks back out and walks over to where Rex is leaning against the counter.

"Follow me Liutenaunt. Sorry for the delay, but the Commander was in a closed door meeting with HIGHCOM."

"I understand LTJG, but, i was told by my CO, Captain Ponders, that the Commander needed to see me ASAP. Standing in fatuiges with TTR on it isn't exactly that comfortable." Rex says.

"How did you get TTR on your fatuiges?" The LTJG asks.

"Live fire exercize. Training this planets Malitia isn't exactly that easy." Rex explains.

The LTJG grunts in response and they walk into an office behind the counter. The office was fairly modern. An AI pedistal was next to a desk on one side of the room, a map-holo was displayed on the wall, and a vid-com was set up at the far end of the room. A man in his thirties or forties, dressed in a white commanders uniform, and puffing on a pipe is looking over the map-holo.

"Commander Keyes, here's that Liutenaunt you wanted to talk to." The LTJG says.

"Thank you Janson." The Commander says as he turns twards Rex.

The LTJG walks out and closes the door behind him.

"I'm Commander Keyes."

"First Liutenant Xanders sir." Rex says, saluting.

"At ease Liutenaunt. I'm not as formal as most officers." Keyes

says.

"Yes sir."

"Call me Jacob." Keyes says as he holds out his hand.

"Rich." Rex says as he takes and shakes the Commanders hand.

"That's one iron grip you have." Keyes says.

"Tends to happen when you've been in the field or quite a while."

"Well, i called you here because i've been given very vauge orders, and i quote, 'Head to Harvest with all possible speed. Hostile contact made. Help Malitia. Marine Liutenaunt imbeded with Malitia will brief you.'"

"Well...we're in a first contact situation. An unknown ship that is not of human make is sitting at the edge of the system. They may make a hostile move, and if they do, we'll have to evacuate the planet, all two million civies."

"Has face-to-face been made yet?"

"No, not with these current visitors."

"What do you mean by 'current' visitors?" Keyes asks.

"The last time we made contact, it ended in a firefight that ended up with all unknowns dead, a ship lost, and three SpecWarf Marines injured."

"That...is not good."

"Yeah, and i was one of the lucky three to be in that toaster. Xenos were raiding crewed and AI captained civie cargo ships near the outskirts, we were called in to ensure it wasn't Innies." Rex explains.

"Has a contact plan been drawn up?" Keyes asks.

"Yes, they will be directed to land in the Parliment gardens. We have no idea where thier ship may be placed. That's where you come in."

"Right. When are they supposed to arrive?"

"Tomorrow at dawn."

"Only a day to prep? That's not much time to get things in position and set up correctly." Keyes says.

"Yeah, but with Harvest's Ag AI helping out, we can get it done."

GNR REFIT/SUPPLY STATION

UNKNOWN LOCATION

APRIL 2 ABG

Admiral Wullf Yularan was on edge. Just a few days ago he had been forced to retreat from his position by a large fleet of CIS cruisers led by a ship named the Invisibe Hand, the flagship of General Grevious and the CIS High Command. He had sent a report to the Jedi Temple several days ago. Now Jedi Master Aayla Secura was bringing in her fleet and the 327th to help take back Naboo and relieve the 212th and 501st trapped on the planets surface.

But, the Resolute and Negotiator were being re-fitted with newer weapons in addition to the numerous repairs and replacment of vital, secondary, and tertiary systems dammaged in the retreat that had the two cruisers out-numbered and out-gunned earlier. This ment that he would be delayed in his arrival to the battle. General Secura and her three ships would be on thier own until the refitting and repairs were done.

On the opposite side of the re-fit station, Aayla Secura was geting ready to dis-embark with her ships and her troopers. She had been briefed by Master Yoda and Admiral Yularan on what she would be up against.

"You ready Commander?" Aayla asks as her second in command, Commander Bly, walks into the bridges' situation/briefing room.

"Ready as i can get. Did you hear what happened to the 501st recently?" The yellow armored clone asks.

"No i have not. What hapened?" Aayla asks.

"Captain Rex died durring thier previous engagement, as did most of Torrent. This is thier first engagement with the company being mostly rookie and replacement toopers from other units." Bly explains as he sets his helmet aside and looks over the battle plans.

"Is this 'Rex' the same one that was with Skywalker and his Padawan durring that hyper-space mishap earlier last year?" Aayla asks.

"The same."

"Then the GAR has lost one of it's best and one of the most effective commanders then." Aayla says.

"Yes it has. What's the situation with Generals Kenobi and Skywalker?"

"They are cut off from all contact. Kenobi is in Theed and Skywalker is in the swamplands somewhere. We cannot contact anyone in Theed, but, we can contact everywhere else."

"Can we contact Skywalker?"

"We can but, he doesn't have a long range radio(LRR). Admiral Yularan told me that the only portable one he had is with General Kenobi. Someone in logistics screwed up and sent him one that worked and enough parts to build one with everything but the major components." Bly says.

"So we have no idea where Skywalker is, Kenobi is surrounded, is

being jammed, and an entire Sepperatist fleet has set up a blockade... Sounds like another day at the office then." Aayla says.

"Yep. When do we move out?" Bly asks.

"Anytime within the next three to five hours."

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

APRIL 2 ABG

In the swamps, the remnants of the 501st were trying to locate their missing general. Little did they know that he was closer than they expected. Below the muddy terrain of the makeshift base in the ruins of an ancient structure was the subterranean structure that was a CIS intelligence gathering base and the current command center for the invasion of Theed.

Minor Boss Rish Loo was tired of being ignored and overlooked at the numerous meetings of the Gungan High Council. His ideals were looked on as unethical and just plain absurd by the majority of the Gungans at Otoh Gunga.

When the armies of the Trade Federation invaded Naboo and attacked Otoh Gunga, his wife, and the majority of his family had been killed by the Droids. His son had gone with the Grand Gungan Army to fight the Trade Federation's army in the Great Plains and had been killed. This is why he hates the Naboo, especially former Queen and present senator Padme Amidalia.

If she had stayed on the planet and done what the Trade Federation wanted her to do, his family would still be alive. And if she hadn't tricked Boss Rugor Nass to let the Naboo use the Gungan Army as cannon fodder, his son would still be alive.

Now he had gathered a group of several hundred loyal followers to his beck and call. Most of which had suffered the same as he has or shares the same vision of a Gungan controlled Naboo with the human Naboo as the political minority instead of the Gungans being the minority.

When he heard that his warriors had captured Jedi General Skywalker, he couldn't have been more pleased. With the infamous 'Chosen One' as his prisoner, the Jedi would have to fulfill his demands, or he would destroy Theed and kill the Jedi.

11. Chapter 11

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

UTGARD SPACEPORT

APRIL 2545

It was the day. The xenos had found and had been able to read the picture message that was plastered on the side of an old cargo ship and a flight of xeno ships had entered the atmos and was on its way towards the parliment complex's makeshift LZ(landing zone). Commander Keyes left a company of ODS'Ts groundside and under Rex's direct command. The Commander himself had gone back to his ship and was prepping the crew of the UNSC Trojan Horse for battle.

While the Commander was prepping his men for action, Rex, Ponders, and al-Cygni were preparing the Malitia and a mixed company of ODS'T, Marines, and SpecWarf operators for the escort of the xenos to a conference room where Govenor Thune and his staff, including Jilan al-Cygni, were waiting.

Just after Rex had briefed the Commander, he had been given a data card with new orders. He was to take over a newly formed company of ODS'Ts to replace one that had been recently lost on Andesia. The majority of the company still had to be assembled. When the Trojan had been scrambled from the Azod shipyard, it had been deployed at little over half strength. This ment only about two understrength companies of Marines instead of a battalion(3-5 companies), and about half a company of ODS'T instead of the usual two to three companies(3 companies=full battalion).

But, the majority of the 'company' were mostly boot recruits who had just graduated from the numerous training camps on Reach, Earth, Mars and other major planets.

Rex and the heavily armed and armored ODS'Ts, along with about another company of Marines, had been selected to be the QRF incase of any major problem occured. This ment that the 'company' was staged in a field with several Pelicans, except for the one flown by WO5 Peterson, WO1 Walters, and First Sergeant(Marine) Daniels. Thier Pelican had been selected to be an emergency evac shuttle for the Govenor and his staff if something did ocur.

The QRF also had several M12 Warthog Armored Infantry Transports, or M12AIT. These vehicles were simmilar to the troop transports, but these had two inches of armor plating and a .50 cal HMG on the roof mounted on a turret that surrounded the gunner with armor and bullet-resistant glass(Imagine one of the US Armies MRAP armored vehicles, but downsized to about the size of a Hummer, but is on a Warthog troop transport frame.).

Rex sat on the bench just inside of one of the Pelicans ramps. He had grabbed all of his gear and was ready to move out as soon as he was given the signal, which he hoped he did not recieve. As he was looking over the details and just starting on the personell records of his company, two NCOs walked past and one looked inside and saw Rex sitting on the bench seats.

"Well, i'll be damned. Liutenaunt Xanders, i wondered what the hell happened to you after Tribute." A Gunny says as he walks up the ramp.

Rex looks up and watches as Sergeant Marcus 'Pete' Stacker and a Staff Sergeant walk up the ramp.

"Staff Stacker...of all the SNCOs in the Corps, i get you for a... a

Gunnery Sergeant?" Rex says with a smirk.

"Yeah. They gave me these after Tribute and gave me orders to get a ODSST company squared up for deployment. Got to the base and the only other person there was the Staff here." Stacker says as he gestures to the stripes and the Staff Sergeant standing behind him.

"What's your name Staff?" Rex asks.

"Lucas Keyes, sir." the Staff says.

"Call me LT, Rich, or Rex. You related to Commander Keyes, Staff?"

"Not that i am aware of."

"How many ODSSTs do we have right now?" Rex asks.

"Not a lot sir. Only enough for about a platoon, maybe two tops." Staff Keyes says.

"That's bad. They all greenhorn boots?" Rex asks.

"Pretty much. And we're the only SNCOs, and you're the only officer so far." Stacker says.

"Wonderful. Split the...'company' up into two teams, attempt to make them an equal number, i'll take one with Staff Keyes here while you take the other, Gunny." Rex orders.

"Will do LT." Stacker says.

"By the way, whats the Company call sign?" Rex asks.

"Thunder." Staff Keyes says.

"I like it. Until we get more SNCOs or officers, my sign is Thunder one-one, Stacker is one-two, and Keyes is one-three." Rex says as he stands up and follows the two SNCOs to get his troopers set and in position.

HYPERSPACE

NEAR NABOO

APRIL 2 ABG

Admiral Yularan was on edge. Just hours ago, he had been given the green light to head back to Naboo with Aayla Securas fleet. But, his ships were not ready to head back, so the General had to head in with her three ships alone until the Resolute and Negotiators refits were complete.

General Secura had left as soon as the word had been given. She had taken her flagship and her fleet of two support Venators to a Hyperspace lane that led to Naboo. She nodded to the ships navigation officer who put in the coordinates for Naboo and initiated the jump. The jump would take at least four to eight hours to reach the edge of the system.

She could only hope that her forces would be there in time to rescue Master Kenobi, Knight Skywalker, the 212th, and the 501st alive. She knew that the fleet was more than likely commanded by General Greivous due to his bold and open attacks on major Republic-affiliated and neutral worlds in the outer and inner rims.

In the Swamplands, Boss Rish Loo was making his way to the prison level where his warriors had placed the Jedi inside of a cell with force-suppressing collars and cuffs. As he enters the cell block, a small squad of guards snap to attention. Each of his troops is equipped with an E-5 rifle and a sidearm, but those were usually issued to officers and NCOs only.

Then he sees his prize for the first time in person. Jedi General Anakin Skywalker. He infamous 'Hero with no fear' and 'The Chosen One'.

"Not so powerful are you now Jedee." Rish says.

"Minor Boss Rish Loo. I thought I smelled something that was offending in this place." Anakin says, taunting the Gungan.

"You notin' wit outa yousa 'Force'. Yousa tink yousa all Bombad. Thosa cuffs are Force suppressive!"

"I thought so. I'll just have to wait for my Padawan to find your little base, wherever we are, and let me out of this cell. Then we'll see who is 'Bombad'. Just you, me, and my saber."

"You Padawan nasa find us. Thesa occupied in Teed wit de Naboo and Bombad Klankar General Greivous. De Naboo Senator willsa die and de Gungan and Naboo will join de Separatists."

Anakin couldn't believe what he was hearing. This Gungan was planning on killing Padme, his wife, giving her head to Greivous, then down the line to Gunray, and give Naboo to the CIS.

"If yousa Council abandon Naboo and dea Senator, shesa will live, while de Gungan make Bombad decision wit de Separatist."

"And what would happen to Senator Amidala if the Council gave up and left?" Anakin asks, concerned.

"Shesa go tosa Bombad General Greivous. Mesa no wanta notink' to do wit her!" Rish says.

"What about my Padawan and troopers?"

"You Padawan stay heresa wit mesa and usa troopers get offa mesa planet and stay offa! Ifa de no listen, I destroy Teed wit Bombad explosion. Boomba! Nothing left! Mesa give yousa one cycle tosa tink dis ova. Den yousa help get Council and klon to leave Naboo to de Gungan!" Rish says as he turns and leaves Anakin alone with his thoughts.

Anakin could only hope that Ahsoka and the others could defend Theed until reinforcements arrive and get him out of wherever he was as soon as they could.

Several thousand kilometers above the swamps and Theed, General

Grevious was awaiting for Theed to fall and receive word that Senator Amidala had been captured. He was hoping that after Rish Loo was finished with Skywalker that he would be allowed to take the Jedi and lay a trap for Kenobi and the other Jedi scum who would attempt a rescue and kill them off in one defeating strike to weaken the morale of the Republic.

He was also there because the CIS had recently made a new group of allies. A multi-species religious monarchy led by so-called Prophets. These 'Prophets' had sent a small group aboard a frigate that the CIS had given them in an attempt to show good faith.

Just as he was planning to head planetside to see how the battle below was going and to check on these... 'Ambassadors', three Republic ships, all Venators, formed up directly accross from his flagship.

[Sir, three Venators have taken up position and are powering up their weapons.] A battle droid says from his console.

"Raghhh! Power up the main guns and fire at will! Release the Vultures and Tri-fighters, burn those Republic dogs from my sight!" Grevious orders as he watches the battle from his highly ornate and custom Captains chair.

As he observes the growing fight, he sees that the central ship in the formation is not the command vessel. It was a cruiser made to look like the command battleship. Then he sees that the one on the right is a fully outfitted destroyer, and that the ship on the far left was the flagship. And it was charging towards a group of small frigates and cruisers that were stationed on the left end of his blockade line.

"Divert all reserve Vultures and Hyenas to intercept that ship on the left flank!" Grevious shouts as he points.

[Roger, roger. Scramble all reserves, scramble all reserves. Target: ship charging left flank.] A droid says into a comm.

"Send in Cruisers twenty through twenty four to reinforce the left flank." Grevious orders to another battle droid.

[The General seems to know the Republic's every move!] Says a droid at one of the gunner stations.

[Roger, roger. He's been fighting them for so long, it makes Unit D-5563 look like a new unit right off the floor!] Says another manning a more complicated gun station nearby.

\[Hey! I heard that!]\ Says D-5563 over the comm.

[Uh-oh.] Says the second gunnery droid.

[Roger, Roger.] Says the first.

On board the GNR flagship Venator of Aayla Securas fleet, Aayla couldn't be more pleased with herself. She had successfully tricked Grevious into placing the majority of his forces to deal with a decoy ship that was made to look like her command ship. This 'command ship' was in reality a battlecruiser with large-bore guns and point defence

rotary cannons. A carbon copy of her own ship, which had most of it's weapons 'hidden' by expertly placed holo-pannels.

"Alright Bly, here we go. Weapons! Fire all guns at Grevious' escort ships. Do not spare a single gun." Aayla orders.

Blue bolts of energy streak accross the void between the Venators and Grevious' fleet. The first barrage hits and downs three of ten ships that were in formation with Grevious' flagship, the Invisible Hand. Then Hand stops firing it's main weapons.

"Uhh... I think we just woke up the Gundark." Bly says to General Secura.

12. Chapter 12

I PUT UP CHAPTERS AFTER I SEE THE LAST CHAPTERS REVIEWS. I DO THIS TO ENSURE THAT I AM NOT MAKING ANY ERRORS AND TO SEE IF ANYBODY WANTS TO CONTRIBUTE SOME ELEMENT TO THE STORY.

SO REVIEW OR NO NEW CHAPTERS!

JOTUN-Automated/AI controlled farm impliment, taxi, plane, or motor vehicle.

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

APRIL 2545

It had been several days since the failed attempt to negotiate with the xenos. Just after the negotiations ended in a firefight, Commander Keyes had opened fire on the xenos ship which sustained major damage to supposed and confirmed weapon systems, the area where a hanger bay was determined to be, and several other areas. Mack, Harvest's Agricultural AI supervisor, had hidden the mass driver and had fired it at the xeno ship in sync with Keyes' first salvo of Archers and heavy point defence gun shells.

Now it was a ground slug fest. Crop dusters were now kamikazi fighter jets, harvesters were make shift tanks and rolling roadblocks, and the smallest bots, even some cars and trucks, were now vehicle borne IED(VBIED) carriers designed to explode when enemy forces entered an area or to charge straight into xeno held areas.

The priority was to get as many of Harvests two to three million people off the planet and to Reach or the Eridanus system and get any help to Harvest as possible to try and re-open negotiations to the hostile xeno force.

On the roads just inside of Utgard, Rex, Lucas, and Stacker were organizing the flow of civilians to the spaceport and protecting the city from enemy gunships and hostile ground troops.

\Thunder one-one, this is Thunder one-two, i got several tuning forks deploying ground-pounders and what appears to be several motorbikes, permission to open fire.\

"Permission granted, snipers only. I don't want a single round wasted. One-three, get your team into ambush positions allong the roadway."

\Roger that one-one. One-three out!\

\One-two over and out.\

In the top floors of a dammaged office tower, a two person team sits patiently, waiting for the green light to engage. One is a female and the other is male.

"You ready Eagle?" Asks the male.

"Only if you are, hotshot." Says Corporal Danielle 'Eagle' Sanders, a rookie ODSN sniper who had been assigned to Gunny Stackers 'platoon'.

The man lying next to her is Recruit Jenkins from Gunny Johnson's platoon. Eagle is armed with a heavily customized SASR99 sniper rifle while Jenkins had an SRS99-AM.

\Eagle, you have green light to engage. Oh, and don't give the Stantch to Mr. Malitia. Stacker out.\

"Alright. Now we get to finnaly blast some gorillas." Eagle says as she takes aim at the very hairy and minimally armored operator of a bike advancing down the road, weaving between cars, attempting to get inside of the city.

She gently squeezes the trigger and a single 5.4mm round exits the barrell at several thousand meters per second and ripps the target clean in two, making the now driverless bike swerve, slam into a concrete barrier, tumble and take out two more bikes behind it. Then Jenkins fires the SRS and takes out another bike which pings off a metal gaurd rail, hits the side of a large truck, bounces back into the roadway, and takes out the bike diectly behind it which flies off a highway bridge, into a river.

"Damn. Nice shot Malit." Eagle says as she fires her rifle again.

Inside the city, Rex was coordinating the speedy evacuation of the city allong with the defence. Bryne had taken his platoon of malitia up to the orbital elevator and had secured it. Civillian craft and freighters rushed back to the elevator depot in orbit and were now filling to capacity, then heading to the edge of the system and prepping for a mass slipspace jump to Reach.

[You doing ok?] Mel asks Rex.

'Yeah. I've...never seen anything like this for several years.'

[Bad memories?]

'First assignment was to evacuate city. Was a Sergeant and suicide bombers were in the crowds...killed my entire squad plus one-fifty while i was talking to my CO fifty yards down an open four-lane at a checkpoint.' Rex 'tells' Mel.

Then a chain of explosions echo through out the city.

"All stations, give me a sit-rep!" Rex orders.

\One-two to one-one, i got xeno tanks at my ten o'clock firing on the highway. Looks like they're trying to clear the way for those bikes and several company sized infantry elements!\ Stacker says.

"Eagle, Jenkins, break it down and RV at my position. All units are to fall back to secondary positions." 'Mel, get me a link to Mack.' Rex says and thinks at the same time.

[You need something LT?] Mack asks.

"Mack, i need the biggest JOTUN VBIEDs you got that can fit on a highway inside Utgard NOW. I have xeno army targeting the outskirts, locate and destroy. Xanders out"

[Will do. Mack out.]

Seconds later, three v flights of three to five automated JOTUN crop dusters with their tanks filled with a very explosive mix of chemicals and fuel cell contents buzz in, start circling, and several pull up and dive straight down.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

APRIL 2 ABG

"We've searched the entire area with in five and three fourths clicks of here commander, all we've found are old tracks from patrols and activity that dates back several weeks to a month. There's nothing here!" Says Lieutenant Appo as Ahsoka had called a meeting of Torrents officers.

"Yes, that's true. But, what is in the center of all the most recent activity?" She asks Appo.

Appo stays silent and doesn't open his mouth.

"Have any of you checked where all the current activity was around besides me?" She asks.

"...Well, uh, it appears that we all thought the other had sir." Says Coric as he rubs the back of his neck, embarrassed.

Ahsoka presses a button on a portable holo-display and reveals that all the activity was centered around the ruins that they were currently inhabiting.

"We've been as blind as a bantha in a sandstorm. Their base is not on the surface, it's underneath us as we speak." Ahsoka says.

"So...what's the plan?" Kix asks.

"Grab scanners and get to work. We find the room closest to the surface, plant entry charges, go in, find Master Skywalker, and stop

whoever's down there from escaping. Just like we did when the Blue Shadow Virus was being made by that Seppie chemist. Dismissed." Ahsoka says, confident in her plan.

After several tense hours, they finally found and had dug down to the roof of the hidden base. Shaped entry charges had been placed and the troopers were set and had everything in place.

\Three. Two. One, fire in the hole!\ Jesse shouts over the com as he sets off the charge.

Six ARF troopers enter the hole and give the all clear signal. The rest of Torrent soon follows with Ahsoka, Fives, Jesse, and Kix being the last four through the hole. Appo and a platoon stayed behind to ensure that nobody or thing escaped the base.

OTOH GUNGA

MAY 2 ABG

In the Gungan Capitol, the Grand Gungan Army was preparing to leave the city. Their mission was considered top secret. Only Representative and Bombad General Jar-Jar Binks and his high officers knew where they were going. A small company of captured, re-built, and re-programmed battle droids were also leaving Otoh Gunga to fight alongside their Gungan allies.

As they reach the surface of the lake, one group goes down one path and another goes down a separate path going in the opposite direction towards Theed.

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

APRIL 2545

The crop dusters dive down and crash into the ground, causing plumes of black smoke blended with blue, red, yellow, and orange flames. Then a massive chain of secondary explosions rock the ground and a larger plume of smoke and fire goes skyward.

[What arty? I don't see any arty, just a brand new field!] Mack says over the com.

"Nice. You got those VBIEDs in position?"

[Yes sir. I got two harvesters and two delivery vans placed on and under the highway and an evacuated office tower. Just give me the word, and i'll make some fireworks.]

"Will do. Keep slowing the advance of these guys outside the city. We need to buy enough time to get everybody out of the city and to the RV for mass jump to Reach." Rex says.

[Will do, Mack out.]

Then Staff Bryne gets on the com.

\Elevator orbital has been cleared. I repeat, elevator orbital has

been cleared. Start the carts, Bryne out!\

\Pack it up Liutenaunt, fall back to the terminal! Johnson, start packing those freight cars with civies, then the passenger cars, we're going to be in the last cars!\ Jilan al-Cygni orders.

\Roger wilco. Alright! Liseten up! Families and kids first, then women, then men! Let's move!\ Johnson shouts.

"All Thunder and UNSC elements fall back. We're going into a tactical retreat. Pile into the 'hogs, as many that can fit without any risk of casualties. Let's move!" Rex says as he grabs his rifle and heads out the door of the abandoned Utgard Constabulary precinct building he had been using as a staging ground with a Second Liutenaunt Jason Chandlers from the Trojans Marine contingent.

He jumps into the drivers seat of the closest armored warthog as several other Marine Sergeants and the other Liutenaunt jump in. One racks the bolt on the roof mounted M247 HMG. A line of four 'hogs leave and race down the city streets, joining up with other UNSC elements, Harvest Malitia, and Constabulary cars.

\Incoming, six high! Five plus bogey craft!\ A marine shouts.

"Take 'em down!" Rex orders.

In seconds, HMGs, rifles, and an ODSST with a M41 rocket start firing at the strafing craft. The HMGs take down two, a rocket hits one square in the center, but the other three were able to pull up, but not without taking out several vehicles in the convoy and taking minor to moderate damage.

"Casualty estimate reports are in sir." Says Chandlers.

"How many we loose?" Rex asks as he swerves to avoid chunks of rubble lying in the road.

"Four ODSSTs are KIA, two MIA, ten to fifteen Marines KIA or MIA, and about two thirds of the Constabulary officers KIA or MIA. That includes the Constabulary brass, and about 85% of the Malitia." Chandlers answers.

"What happened to the Constabulary brass?" Rex asks.

"Those xeno tanks targeted it and blew it to hell. The brass was having a crisis meeting in the chiefs office coordinating some sort of rescue for about sixty trapped civies trapped inside a building hit by a barrage from that xeno ship."

"Damn." Rex says as he drives into one of the now decimated parking structures around the elevator.

He slams on the brakes and the Marines, ODSST, malita, and surviving Constabulary officers rush into the a side door, a swarm of xeno bugs emerge firing pistols at the large crowd of exhausted human defenders.

SORRY ABOUT THE DELAY. SCHOOL HAS JUST STARTED AND I HAD TO SCRAMBLE TO GET SOME SPECILIZED MATERIAL FOR SEVERAL CLASSES, SO I HAD NO TIME TO WRIGHT.

IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND 'GUNGAN' TALK, PLEASE LET ME KNOW AND I WILL PLACE A 'TRANSLAION' BEHIND THE LINES THAT JAR-JAR, RISH, AND THE OTHER GUNGANS SPEAK. PLEASE POST NOTIFICATION AS A REVIEW.

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

MAY 2 ABG

Just before Ahsoka and the others drop into the CIS base, more charges are set off in other areas above rooms and traps are laid and set. This is to tie up the enemy in other areas as the main force would divide and clear the base corridor by corridor, and hopefully find General Skywalker along the way.

As previously planned, Coric takes half of the main force down one corridor while Ahsoka and Fives take the other. The plan was to divide and cover the base faster than one large group of troopers would. The diversionary assault in multiple different areas by Appo's troopers would divert enemy attention away from the areas where the two main forces were located and heading.

Inside a cell in the base prison cell blocks, Anakin hears and feels the ground shake after several fair sized explosions. Alarm klaxons start going off and several Gungans rush into his cell, deactivate a force field, and drag him out of the block.

As he is half dragged and half walked down a corridor, the sound of blasterfire fades behind him. He watches as Gungans and battledroids head down the corridor the way they came. Then the next corridor junction up, blue bolts rip droids and gungans to pieces as they enter a kill zone. Then Anakin is dropped to the floor and he sees one of his former gaurds hit the floor with a shocked look on his face with a small wisp of smoke rising from the back of it's head.

Then an armored hand helps him up and undoes his cuffs. He turns around and finds Sergeant Coric and several other troopers standing behind him.

"You alright General?" Coric asks.

"Yeah, i think. Where's Ahsoka?" Anakin asks as he scans the group of troopers.

"The Commander is currently clearing the other half of the base. Liutenaunt Appo is topside to prevent any Seppies to escape. Captain Fives is with the Commander." Coric answers.

Accrost the base, Ahsoka and Fives had found and were fighting through what looked like some sort of research and development center. On one side is an eerily simmlilar ring-shaped device. One exactly like the one that Rex had been killed by.

"Watch your right! Stay away from that fekking ring! If it gets hit, we're all dead!" Fives shouts.

Ahsoka hunkers down behind a large stack of crates on the far left and deactivates her sabers. Troopers do the same as several Gungans with heavy repeaters and rapid-firing blasters enter the room and open fire. Several troopers don't get to cover in time and are riddled with red bolts of energized plasma.

Then an explosion nearby stuns the gungans. Green and blue bolts strike the Gungans and more Gungans enter the fray through the roof. Ones with the crest of Ootoh Gungas Grand Army. Then Jar-Jar Binks with a military-grade chest plate enters with a DC-17 drawn.

"Jar-Jar? What are you doing here?" Ahsoka asks as she stands up with her hood flipped back.

"Wesa here to help. Oursa spies reporta Teed invaded and desa Republeec in moy-moy bombad trouble." Jar-Jar explains as his men start moving deeper into the base with Ahsoka's troopers.

"When did you get to become a General? I thought you were a Senator." Fives asks.

"A Gungan Senator is usually Bombad General 'n de Grand Army Reserve." Jar-Jar points out as they exit the lab.

"Do you know who's in command of this base?" Ahsoka asks.

"De disgraced Minor Boss Rish Loo. Hesa try too overthrow Boss Lyonie and de council. Hesa want de Naboo to leeeve planeet and geeve Padme to de Seperateest!" Jar-Jar says.

"I heard about how he had been exiled and multiple Gungans leaving the Gungan Grand Council in protest. By the way, do you know what that ring is for?" Fives asks.

"Yes. Dat ring is a teleporter used to place de clankers behind Republeec lines in seecret. So say ursa spies. Rish Loo has heelped develop dose devicees wit his Reebel force." Jar-Jar says.

As Ahsoka hears this, she stiffens and feels a wave of pure anger and hate allong with a ping of sadness that Rex was no longer alive due to this Rish Loo developing these teleportation rings. But she quickly regains her composure knowing that Rex wouldn't want her to go down a path that would destroy everything that they had both fought for and believed in.

EPSI INDI

HARVEST

APRIL 2545

Rex was heading down the main corridor when he saw a soft green glow coming from an adjacent corridor to his right. He had seen this glowing before. It had been in the cargo ship, and the gardens. Allong with the xenos.

"Contact right!" Rex shouts as he quickly flips his rifle to full auto and opens fire.

Green blobs of energy hit the floors, walls, ceiling, and his men. The wounded were picked up and dragged towards the lift by others and the unscathed covered their retreat. The dead were left. But not after being relieved of weapons, ammo or hastily rigged with deadly traps, such as a can of C7 with a 5-second delayed time det cap slapped on the top and placed inside a satchel of more explosives or under a body part.

As he was running down the hall, Rex watched as a bug aim at him. He swung his rifle, hears a seemingly deafening click, and he looks down at the ammo display. Snake eyes. Then time seemed to slow to a crawl. He acted on years of drilled instinct. He slung his rifle with his left, and drew his M6 with his right. He fired once, twice, three times. All three hit the offending creature in the head and upper most thorax, making it explode as the armor-piercing, high-explosive rounds detonate on impact.

Time sped back up to a more normal pace and he ran down the corridor with the mass of Marines, Militia, and Constabulary employees. They cram as many people as they can into the lifts.

As Rex almost reaches the last passenger car, spikes whiz past his helmet. He turns and fires several rounds at a charging xeno in a redish-gold set of armor with some sort of archaic stone hammer slung on its back.

"Lieutenant! In here!" Shouts a female ODS with a silenced M7 in one hand and a Stanchion on her back standing inside the door of another lift.

Several more spikes whiz past Rex as time slows once more and he dives into the elevator, flips onto his back, emptying the remaining rounds in his pistols clip as the door shuts and the elevator starts to go up.

He reloads his pistol as he gets up. As he holsters his sidearm, looks up and sees Gunny Stacker, the Corporal, Recruit Jenkins, Staff Keyes, Gunny Johnson, and Johnsons remaining recruits inside the lift. Most were unconscious except for himself, Johnson, the Corporal, Keyes, and Stacker.

"That was cutting it a little close Lieutenant." Stacker says.

"Yeah, tell me about it. That...oversized gorilla almost had me on a skewer!" Rex says.

"What's the plan now LT?" The Corporal asks.

"As soon as we reach the top, we rig the cars with some nice farewell gifts, send them back down, leave, and blow the orbital. Then we head for Reach." Rex says.

NABOO

ORBIT

MAY 2 ABG

"Uhh... I think we just woke up the Gundark." Bly says to General Secura as the Invisible hands guns stop firing at the decoy.

"Full power to the engines! We need to get past those ships before Greivous has time to react!" Aayla orders.

The Venator lurches and charges four CIS craft. All of which were four Munificent-class frigates. All had light of the heavy guns from frigates and other older and lighter craft were mostly removed and placed inside the larger ships in the CIS Navy due to limited resources.

The bottom of the ship grazes the top of one of the frigates and enters Naboo's atmosphere. The ship heads toward Theed just as another CIS Munificent-class with strange markings and a purple paint scheme zooms by, heading away from the general area of Theed and the battle above.

"Ma'am, should we pursue that frigate?" Asks a pit officer.

"No. General Kenobi needs us more. We need to find out what the situation in Theed is."

In Theed, it was going to the banthas faster than a podrace lap. The droids had become very aggressive and appeared to be heavily modified. The line had been pushed back to the last line of defence. Charges and traps had been laid and activated. The 212th and the Royal Naboo forces had taken heavy losses and the majority were heavily injured.

Not a single piece of armor, light or heavy, was left operable. One group of about the size of a platoon was trapped behind enemy lines with two destroyed AT-TE's as their only cover from small and medium weapons fire.

The main body of the 212th and RN forces with Commander Cody and General Kenobi were doing no better. The sniper nests in the palace had been destroyed and the entire com-net was still being jammed. The only thing stopping the Separatist advance was an old closed off sub-terranean escape tunnel that had been blown up where it crossed directly across and under the main routes to the Palace and a defensive line had been formed in the rubble of two fallen buildings that had fallen across the roadway.

Commander Cody was watching the enemy line via macro-binocs from a small crack between the mortar-coated dura-crete bricks that was the one of the only physical obstacles that was left of his defence line. The last operational AT-TE was in an alleyway close by, sheltered by the two remaining walls and roof of a large, burnt and blown out building. Its main gun was hidden behind a small opening made in the mass of rubble from another structure.

"What's the situation Cody?" Asks General Kenobi as he walks up, crouched.

"The same as it's been almost all day. The tinnies on that side, and us over here. Only the standard BDs have been replaced with advanced BDs and organics with very ornate armor and very exotic weapons."

Cody says.

"Let me take a look." Kenobi says as Cody hands him the binocs.

The older orange haired jedi takes the binocs and scans the enemy lines. The droids have purple and blue markings on thier armored casings allong with a very intracate symbol on the left side of thier armor plates. Several small organics with large packs and masks on thier backs with black armor move around behind the droids. Behind them are a least five large wookiee-like creatures carrying large rifles and one had a fair-sized device on a pike slung across it's back and was clad in a light red/black armor.

"Well... That's quite the group we got over there. Squads of twelve droids being led by the black armored beings and those being commanded by that large fellow in the red." Kenobi observes.

"The exact same conclusion i've reached. But i'm wondering what's in those packs on the backs of those black buggers." Cody says as he looks down the sighs of his DC-15 carbine.

Just then, a sleek, maroon craft glided into an intersection a fair ways down the street. It stoppes and a loud whirr and wa-thunk! Echoed throughout the streets. A single large red-glowing projectile goes over the heads of the droid line and twards the Republic line.

"Incoming!" A trooper shouts.

The round flies over the line and hits right in the center of the Palace Plaza, where most of the Queen's speeches and planet-wide celabratory events were held. As the troopers duck and scramble for cover, the red-armored organic roars and raises it's weapon. The droids quickly leave thier position and charge, firing, allong with the black-armored organics.

"Here they come!" Shouts Joker from a heavy repeater position.

"Get on line and start firing!" Cody orders as he fires his DC-15s.

The troopers take thier positions and open fire. The maroon craft glides forward and another being in light blue armor dismounts on one side and starts firing some sort of marksman weapon at the clones.

A trooper near a heavy gun is hit by several rounds from this marksman and the objects fired from it explode, making the nearby gun go up as well. The craftfirea a red shell in the vicinity of the smoke and explosion, making the one casualty turn into five.

Boil rushes up next to Cody and General Kenobi.

"Sirs, if that...thing and that craft keep this up, we're all dead. Permission to a rocket out allong the flank to get those out of our hair!"

"It's all your decision General." Cody says as he turns back around and keeps firing.

"Yes you may, but take one other with you!" Kenobi orders as the ARF

trooper moves towards a small makeshift armory placed allong the line.

He grabs a launcher from the cache allong with a pack of four rockets. Along the way, he moves up next to Joker.

"Joker! I need you to follow me."

"What!? I can't leave my gun!" Joker shouts.

"I'm going to elimenate that craft and sniper. I was ordered to being you allong with me." Boil says, half lying.

"Alright. Gus!"

"Yo!" Says a trooper down the line a ways.

"Take over my gun! I gotta go with Boil here!"

"Will do Joker!" Gus says as he slides in, trading his DC-15a for the heavy repeater.

The two troopers move as quietly as they can up to the second story of a three sory structure, a fair distance from thier comrades position. They set upand Boil let's loose a rocket aimed at the sniper just infront of the craft firing the red-glowing shells. The rocket hits the snipers position, creating a massive plume of dust and smoke.

"Nice shot! Now let's get out of here!" Joker says, turning.

"Not yet. Still need to take down that craft." Boil says.

"Wait... You dusted the sniper instead of that armed...thing!? You alwaysgo for the largest target first! The detonation of it's ammo and fuel would have killed the sniper!" Joker yells.

The smoke clears and the craft had turned towards the building with it's gun glowing red, holding back an over-charged round to be unleashed.

"Oh fek..." Boil mutters as he lowers the launcher.

14. Chapter 14

REACH

GAMMA ORBITAL STATION

APRIL 2545

Gamma station was the primary relay for coms for the military, civilian, and diplomatic lines, it also served as the 'brain' of the orbital defence platform, or ODP network, and all outgoing and incoming space traffic heading to Reach. It even had a small orbital lift. The Smart AI Doppler was the stations Dockmaster and general caretaker of the station.

It had been a routine day when oupost Fermion started relaying an

emergency broadcast to Doppler and his handler, a former ONI Spec Warf Liutenaunt Junior Grade who was only known as Fhajad. He had been injured in an unfortunate 'training accident' that led him to have Parkinsons disease in his lower extremities.

[Sir, outpost Fermion has at least several hundred slip-space murmurs off of the station!] Doppler says as he pops up.

His hologram is one of a 20th century air-traffic control official dressed in a white button-up shirt with a loosened black tie, two pens in a breast pocket, a headset, black pants, and black dress shoes.

Fhajad turns as slip-space ruptures come into view and a single military frigate emerges with hundreds of civilian craft behind it. Then the com crackles and a single voice breaks through.

\This is Commander Jacob Keyes, CO of the UNSC Trojan Horse to all on this channel, all craft are civilian. I repeat, all craft behind us are civilian. Anybody hearing this respond!\

"This is Liutenaunt Fhajad aboard the station Gamma. What the hell is going on with all these civilian craft!?"

\Liutenaunt Fhajad, this is First Liutenaunt Xanders, ONI Section Three. Your request is tier Black. Will explain in detail as soon as the Trojan can be docked. And I can meet you. In private.\ Says a second, battle-hardened and tired voice from the other end of the com line.

"That's already being arranged by the Dockmaster. Please head to docking port A-ten. What about the civilian craft?" Fhajad asks as he gestures to Doppler to get the dock ready.

\Let them dock and unload. Keep them inside the hangers under guard. Nobody in or out of those hangers. Supply them with cots, food, and water. If possible, triage teams and medics would be appreciated to deal with civilian and military casualties.\ Says Liutenaunt Xanders.

Several minutes later, after the UNSC Trojan Horse and the civilian craft had been docked and unloaded, Liutenaunt Fhajad rolled his motorized wheelchair down the corridor towards the Trojan. As he was halfway there, the six foot six form in ODST armor stained with some sort of foul-smelling goo with an MA slung across the trooper's chest.

"Liutenaunt Fhajad I presume." Says the ODST as he walks closer.

"Yes I am, how can I help you trooper?" Fhajad says as he stops his chair.

The trooper walks up and then Fhajad sees the silver markings of a First Liutenaunt on the trooper's armor.

"First Liutenaunt Rich Xanders. I apologize for my appearance and...odor." The Liutenaunt says as he takes off his helmet and holds out his hand.

Fhajad takes it and shakes. The troopers grip is strong. An all to familiar strong, strong as his former squad members in the 'program' were now. Just after he was injured.

"Strong grip there Liutenaunt. Now, what the hell is going on here?" Fhajad asks.

"Is there a soundproof debrief room with a fully operational com system nearby?" The ODSI asks.

"Yes there is. Follow me." Fhajad says as he quickly turns and rolls down the hall.

After a fair walk down the hall thhe two each the soundproof room and Xanders pulls a data chip from his tac-pad and places it into a port on the com suite. An AI pops up in a black ONI combat uniform.

"What the..? You have an AI? A combat smart AI?" Fhajad asks, dumbfounded. Only one other person he knew had one. His former Squad Leader.

"Liutenaunt, meet Melissa. Mel here is a highly complex 8th gen AI. She'll debrief you and the two Admirals."

"Wait. Admirals!?" Fhajad asks, shocked that the ODSI had direct contact to high-rank UNSC brass.

A large screen flickers and the lights dim. Two cameras activate and Grand Admiral Hood and Vice Admiral Witcomb pop upon the same screen. Fhajad instantly falls on second nature salutes the two of the most powerful Admirals in the entire UNSC command structure.

"Sirs!" Fhajad says, saluting from his wheelchair.

The Admirals return the salute and look towards the ODSI Liutenaunt.

\Liutenaunt Xanders, i see you've left Harvest. Care to explain?\ Lord Hood asks.

"They hit us full on sir. Advanced weaponry and overwhelming numbers. The only option was a fighting retreat." Xanders says

[So bad that we had to put Constabulary Officers on the lines armed with rifles and minimal ammo and use JOTUN crop dusters and craft for suicide vessels armed with explosives. Al the survivors are now aboard this station.] Melissa says, finishing for Xanders.

\How many craft were there in total?\ Witcomb asks.

"One. It was the largest ship i've seen to date. Only exception is to project 'I'. Heavy guns and torpedos. The Trojan was able to disable the ship with it's guns and a joint MAC strike by the stationary mass driver of the colony and the Trojan's double Mac." Xanders says.

\Did the craft have any shielding whatsoever?\ Lord Hood asks.

[The Trojan had it's signature masked to one of a civilian freighter. The ships shields may have been down when the strike went. It also

took three barrages of the double and four of the MD to take it down. And, may i remind you sirs, that's without the shields being raised.] Mel says.

\Lord Hood, i've just recieved word that the Colonial Authority just sent three crafts, two Paris and one Distroyer to Harvest to investigate the loss of all com signals.\ Says Witcomb.

"Sirs, as we left Harvest, another ship had arrived in the system. It matches the same specs of the craft the Trojan dammaged. We left before it was able to spot us and before a full scan was completed." Xanders says.

Lord Hoods eyes widen as well as Witcombs.

\That settles it, i'm going to get Preston off of his civie ass and into action. Sir, i'm going to give him a battle group and get them to Harvest to distroy any hostiles and stop those CMA ships before they get there.\ Witcomb says as his vid feed ends.

\Liutenaunt Xanders, the rest of your company is stationed at FLEETCOM HQ. Grab enough Pelicans from the Trojan and get all your troopers aboard. Then head to Chi-Ceti with the Trojan and pick up the 'program' members. Commander Keyes will be briefed. You have full tactical command. Liutenaunt Fhajad, you are not to say a word of this meeting to anybody. You'll be transfered to Earth to head the Intel and data gathering and analysis on these guys. Give me as much intel on them as possible. Hood out.\ The link to Lord Hood ends and Xanders grabs the AI chip, puts on his helmet, and leaves the room quickly.

NABOO

THEED

MAY 2 ABG

"Oh fek..." Boil mutters as he lowers the launcher.

Then, a fairly large explosion envelops the craft. A fairly large group of Gungans and other troopers from the 212th charge out of alleyways. The attacking enemy force, was now totaly surrounded.

"Joker! Get over here! Take a look at this." Boil says.

"Dang. Somebody called the calvary in the nick of time." Joker says.

"Or not. Look up." Boil says pointing at the sky above them.

"Oh bantha." Joker says.

Several purple, insectoid shaped craft drop down and head twards the enemy position. A section the side drops and two short creatures simmilar to the ones in the black take positions behind some sort of turret and start firing on the Gungans and both lines of the 212th. This is repeated on all the craft simultaneously. Blue bolts of energy hit and dance around the troopers and Gungans. Several hit the gound with smoking holes and large burns on thier bodies and

armor.

They hover above the ground and blue shafts drop down. The black armored creatures and the five wookiee-like beings, leaving the droids behind. The craft quickly leave the area, rising up and heading over the buildings towards a cruiser above the city. Then the droids get reinforcements, the droids that had been pulled back had returned. Recharged, rearmed, repaired, and ready for action.

The wave hits the rear of the 'reinforcements' and traps them between the first wave, placing them in danger of being killed by friendly fire.

Then the firing stops below as a triangular-shaped shadow enveops the ground. Everybody looks up and sees the underside of a Venator floating above the city. Gunships streak down and deploy troopers with yellow markings on thier armor. It was the 327th Star Corps.

Inside the palace walls, several gunships land with General Secura and Commander Bly. General Kenobi is helped to them by Cody. Kenobi had been thrown back by one of the shells from the maroon craft and was injured. Jus enough to render a limp and a minor bleeding laceration right at his hairline.

"Are you alright Master Kenobi?" Aalya asks.

"Yes, i am fine. Just got tossed around a bit. Good thing you showed up when you did." Kenobi says.

"Do you know where Skywalker is?"

"No sir. Our coms were jammed. They could be dead for all we know." Cody says as a 327th medic takes General Kenobi to the med-bay.

"I'll have to send a team to locate them. Your troopers can stand down and rest. As soon as Admiral Yuluran arrives, you and your troopers will be heading back to Courasaunt for about four weeks of r&r."

15. Chapter 15

NABOO

SWAMPLANDS

CIS UNDERGROUND LABRATORY

MAY 2 ABG

As Jar-Jars men lead the way, Ahoska and her men fight thier way towards the underground hanger bay. The bay was apparently built at an incline with long tunnels leading to hidden doors. These tunnels helped the ships arriving and leaving to slip in and out of the base with the outmost secrecy. The position of the tunnel entrance/exits were out of the maximum range of most of the radar systems emplaced at Theed's space/skyport.

Just as they near the doors to the hanger, a fair sized group of Gungan rebels run into the hanger. Several stop and start shooting. They are quickly killed by blasterfire from several troopers and Gungan Grand Army(GGA) commandos. The GGA Commandos had the same training as the Naboo Royal Gaurd(NRG) and the Courasaunt Gaurd Shock Troops.

The rounds fired by the rebel troopers left enough time for the door to slam shut and lock. This gave the escaping Gungans plenty of time to get away if anybody didn't act quickly.

Ahsoka acts quickly, jamming her saber into the center of the door and twists it back and forth. She then steps back, and gives the door a very large push with the force. The door caves in and flies into the hanger, sparking as it slid allong the dura-crete floor. Ahsoka led the way into the hanger. Just infront of her and the others, a single shuttle was preping to lift off and leave.

"Stop that ship!" Ahsoka shouts.

Several well placed bolts from her troopers and Jar-jars men disable the ships engines and cause a small fire. The fire suppression system kicked on and immedeately, a large door sealed off the tunnel that led to the surface. The sealing of this door trapped the shuttle and anybody trying to escape inside the smoky hanger.

But, a secondary door slammed shut behind Ahsoka, trapping herself and about fifteen other troopers and GGA troops inside the hanger with a shuttle that held up to about a squads(12-24 beings) in it's cargo hold.

Outside the hanger, Fives, Jar-Jar, and the others were trying to get through the secondary blast door. It was slow due to that none of them had access to any breaching charges that wouldn't make the door fly inwards and kill those trapped on the other side. They had to cut through with an amplified surgical laser that Kix had and two small cutting tortches that Fives and a Gungan trooper had.

Across the base, Anakin and Coric were making thier way twards Fives and Jar-Jar. But, tey were clearing every room that they cam across and were laying traps inside the cleared rooms after marking the doorways with a large T and an X. The T was to represent a trap and X to signal that it had been cleared.

Several rooms had been ocupied by astromechs, protocol droids, other bots, and minimally armed or un-armed battle droids working on consoles, strange parts, or packaging the parts in cartons labeled as food, parts for medical equipment, speeder/ship parts, and even a few labled as childrens toys. The droids inside were immedeately shot or manually shut down.

Coric looked at a fully built section and found it looked familliar. It looked like a section from the ring that had blown up and killed his former Captain. It made him extremely angry that the commander of this base was responsible for killing him. But, he was extremely relieved that the place where they were made and been found. The production would stop after they left as it was either dismantled and removed, distroyed on site, or the entrances closed off with the corridors collapsed and/or bueried.

"What's that Coric?" Asks Anakin as he walks up beside him.

"It's what killed Rex sir. This is the manufacturing center, and, probably, the testing center for those fekk'n rings." Coric says.

Anakin stiffens as his anger soars. Rish Loo was the one that created the rings. After he would be done with Rish Loo, he would regret even thinking of building those rings.

REACH

SURFACE

FLEETCOM MILITARY COMPOUND

APRIL 2545

For Liutenaunt Carlos Perez, it was another boring day waiting for his CO to arrive. He had been shocked to learn just weeks ago that he was being moved from a desk-jockey position as a supply clerk directly to a front-line SpecWarf ODST unit. He was placed into the company as the executive officer, or XO. His subordinantes were Second Liutenaunts Parisa and Emily 'Ice' Frost. They all led a platoon each, this ment that thier company had 3 platoons or more depending if thier mystery CO had any ODSTs with them.

He had just finnishd his usual PT run when a flight of several Pelicans troop transports with aparent battle dammage flew overhead and land at the airfield near the mess hall and the med-bay. As he jogged twards the airfield, Marines and ODSTs from accrost the area swarmed twards the Pelicans. Several Warthog flatbeds with Corpsmans and doctors from the med-bay roared twards the Pelicans.

Then the wounded start emerging from the Pelicans. There were CMA malitia members, Marines, ODSTs, and even a few Constabulary officers. Several were carried out and lined up on the ground with green blankets covering the bodies. From what Carlos could see, most had burns and nasty projectile wounds.

Then his com-pad started to vibrate and buzz. He looked at the wrist-mounted device and saw he was to get Thunder Company assembled at the airfields Pelican hanger for immedeate combat deployment. His eyes widen and he quickly moves to the company HQ.

About a half-hour later, the entire company was rounded up with all of thier gear in thier packs. In the front row sat Corporal David 'Shorty' Flynn, Lance Corporals Zachary Winters and Sofia 'Sparks' Ramirez. Winters tended to be a wiseass and Sparks was the mechanical expert and ball breaker of Thunder. Private First Class Dawn 'Pyro' Orielly was the demo expert. A literal Van Gogh with EX.

Then there was Private Even 'Romes' Franks, the self proclaimed ladies man. He was always after the girls. Saprks was his main interest. He had gone through boot camp with a spotless record, if you didn't count the few times he flirted with other female canidates and showed of his 'skills'. One of which almost killed three drill instructors(DIs) and Major.

That earned him a set back from achieving a possible NCO position

after graduation and possible further technical training in low-level command and combat skills.

The humming whine of Pelican engines drew the attention of the entire Company as three pelicans, two with extended troop-bays, or 'blood-trays', swing around toward the seventy-something crowd of ODS'T's that were standing and sitting inside the hanger. The doors and ramps dropped.

Soon, they were aboard an apparent frigate hanger. The sheer size of this particular frigate baffled the Lieutenant. It was almost twice the size of a normal Stalwart, and it looked like a civilian transport/cargo ship from the outside. Deck crews were prepping F-41 Broadwords and Pelicans for combat action. The company assembles according to each trooper's position inside his or her Platoon.

An AI pedestal comes to life as a female avatar in ODS'T combat gear appears.

[Lieutenant Perez I presume?] The AI asks.

"Yes I am, and you are..?" Carlos asks.

[Melissa, but I prefer Mel. The troopers are to report to Gunny Stacker and Staff Keyes in the drop bay for pod and room assignments. The officers and SNCOs are to report to the bridge's briefing room to be given the missions details. Welcome aboard the UNSC Trojan Horse.] Says Mel.

Carlos relays the orders and follows Mel's instructions to find the bridge. Along the way, he and the other two female Lieutenants, along with some of the less-experienced SNCOs can't help but wonder what their assignment is. Then they reach the briefing room. The door slides open and they see three men, two in ODS'T armor and one in a Naval Officers uniform waiting.

"Welcome aboard troopers. I'm Commander Keyes, the CO of the Trojan. Take a seat so we can begin." The naval-uniformed man says.

The three lieutenants sit down in the front row in the center. The SNCOs sit behind their officers.

"Lieutenant Xanders, the floor is yours." Says the Commander as he leaves.

A towering figure in ODS'T armor stepped forward and scanned the room. His eyes were hidden by a pair of black ballistic glasses he had an advanced com-pad on his wrist and an enlarged M6C on his right leg. The way he carried himself screamed that he deserved respect and was experienced.

"Alright then, to business. I'm Lieutenant Xanders, your new CO. This is Gunny Johnson, Thunders senior-most non-com, apart from Gunny Stacker and Staff Keyes, who you'll meet in a while. And I want to tell you this important fact before we start the briefing. This company doesn't operate under the UNSC Marine Corps OR any DF banners."

Carlos' mouth drops open and several others voice their protests about being 'spookified' or becoming a black hole in records.

"BUT, we're not under ONI either. We're run by HIGHCOM it's self. I report directly to Lord Hood personally. Same as the personell were going to picking up allong the way. They will be our fourth Platoon, and under my direct command. Got it?" Xanders asks.

"Yes sir." Say only two or three out of the thirteen.

Carlos instantly becomes curious as to how the CO got acquainted with the military leader of the UNSC.

"Gunny, i think i may have hearing dammage, do you agree?" Xanders asks Johnson.

"If you do sir, then i do as well. You better ask them again sir." Johnson says.

"Now, i'll repeat myself. Do you get it Marines!?" Xanders shouts.

"Sir, yes, sir!" Replies the entire room.

"That's more like it! Now, the mission. The Harvest system had started to come under assault about a month ago. Gunny Johnson, Stacker, Staff Keyes, another Gunny, an ONI officer, and a Captain were training Harvests CMA Malitia when it happened. The Trojan responded to an emergency transmission i had sent to Lord Hood who then sent it to Admiral Standforth. We had only half a platoon of regular Marines, the other half of Thunder, the barely trained Malitia, and a few Constabulary officers. We came out with over sixty percent casualtes in a fighting retreat to cover 2 million evacing civillians. Only about a million or less are left alive out of the civie population. Admiral Cole has been taken out of retirement and has been placed in command of a battle group which is going to Harvest, which is now under military quarantine, to stop two frigates and a distroyer from the CMA from entering Harvests vicinity, turn them back, and engage any hostiles in orbit of, en-route to, and on the surface of Harvest. We'll be going to Chi-Ceti to pick up our fourth platoon. And then we're gonna go and join Admiral Cole. The fight will be long and hard. We will have many casualties until reinforcements or the order to pull back arrive. This briefing is adjourned, the next briefing will take place after we pick up fourth platoon. Dismissed!"

NABOO

MAY 2 ABG

Anakin rushed through the corridors twards is padawans force signature. As he reaches it's origin, he smells burning metal. Behind him, Coric and several other troopers try and keep up. Then he rounds the corner and finds Fives, Kix, and Jesse attempting to cut through a large blast door with a surgical laser and two light-duty cutting lasers.

"Stand back!" Anakin warns.

The three troopers step back as Anakin quickly and efficiently as possible, cuts a circle out of the door and shoves it with his right shoulder. Hard. It caves in and he rushes into the hanger. Several

Gungan Rebels are dead allong with several clone and GGA trooper bodies strewn about the hanger.

The he sees it. Rish Loo in stun cuffs on the ground being gagged by a trooper as he was being held down by Ahsoka using the force and two other Gungans. His ramblings were cut short as the gag was secured and his feet were also bound.

"Shut up already! Get this piece of bantha poodoo out of my sight Captain!" Ahsoka orders.

"Yes ma'am." Fives says as he and several Gungans and troopers grab Loos legs and arms, half dragging, half carrying him out of the smoke filled hanger.

"Ahsoka, what happened in here?" Anakin asks, mildly furious.

"We found the hangers location, and went to investigate. We saw several rebels run in here with some stopping to fire at us. They were dropped and i entered with several GGA members and troopers behind me. That shuttle was about to lift off and i ordered them to stop it. The engines were hit and started on fire. A supression system kicked in and two large blast doors closed. Trapping me and fifteen others in here. We became engaged in hand-to-hand and close-quarters fighting, which resulted in heavy casualties. HE tried to escape and was tackled by the trooper and the two GGA members, i pinned him down while the trooper place him in cuffs. He proceeded to complain and start ranting about us being 'republic dogs' and 'bantha fodder'. Then i had him gagged just as you arrived, Master." Ahsoka says calmly as she clips her sabers to her belt.

"Sounds like you did a pretty good job Soka. Ju... Something wrong?" Anakin asks as Ahsokas face fell at the mention of one of her many nicknames.

"Please, don't call me Soka, Master." Ahsoka asks.

"Alright, Ahsoka. You've earned at least that much. Head to the surface and relax. You've done enough for today, Padawan." Anakin says as he walks away.

16. Chapter 16

JUST A HEADS-UP FOR THOSE WHO HAVE READ HALO-FALL OF REACH, I WILL BE CHANGING THE TIME-LINE A LITTLE. THE 'PROJECT' MEMBERS HAVEN'T BEEN BRIEFED ABOUT HARVEST.

UNSC TROJAN HORSE

SOMEWHERE NEAR CHI-CETI

MAY 2545

As the Trojan exits slipspace, Rex looks out the bridge's view screen and watches as a single Paris-class frigate is in full reverse engines, backing twards the planet. In front of it, sits an enemy vessel firing at the wounded ship.

"Commander Keyes, we've got company!" Rex shouts.

Commander Keyes turns around from a holo-table and stands next to Rex.

"Oh shit. Sound general quarters! Full battlestations, condition red!" Keyes orders as he sees the purple vessel chasing the Paris-class frigate.

The lights in the bridge dim to a dark red and a klaxon and a ear-splitting whislte tone sounds through out the ship.

Aboard the Paris-class frigate, the UNSC Commonwealth, Captain Wallace, Doctor Halsey, and some of the bridge crew were shocked to see a civillian craft emerge from slipspace behind the hostile craft.

"Comms, get me a line to that ship now!" Wallace orders.

"No can do sir, com and nav dishes have been hit, AI core has been overloaded, and all systems apart from the MAC, weapons, life support, engines, FOF readers, and lighting are down." Says the ships XO.

"Damn! Fire off a point defence battery, SOS pattern!" Wallace orders.

When Commander Keyes saw the SOS burst from the Paris-class. His anger soared.

"Charge the MAC, high velocity explosive, double round. Let's say hello to our new advirsary." Keyes orders.

The MAC charges and fires.

On the bridge of the Commonwealth, The entire bridge goes silent as the supposed civillian ship fires a MAC gun at the enemy. The enemy ship responds by firing the rear half of it's weapons compliment twards the new arrival. Several hit thier mark. Ripples of silver and blue splash where the rounds impacted the MAC-armed ship.

Then the ship goes silent. Its outter lights go out and seems to dissapear into the black void of space. Then it re-appears closer to the hostile and expoldes into action. The ship opens up with point defence guns firing blue rounds at the enemy craft. Archer missiles streak twards the enemy craft and splash against an energy shield, some pass through and start damaging the hostile.

"That's our window. John, take the others planetside and get armored up." Halsey says as the enemy craft heads twards open space, away from both craft, full burn on it's engines.

Then the black and grey 'civillian' craft closes in, and the sides of the ship become visible and the seal of UNSC HIGHCOM with the name UNSC TROJAN HORSE are stamped on the side. A signal light flashes in morse code near the bridge on the top of the craft.

"They want to meet us at the Damascus Materials Development Center(DMDC). I'll signal an affirmative. You get yourself and the...'program' members groundside Doctor Halsey." Captain Wallace says.

"I wouldn't have it any other way Captain. Let's go John." Halsey says as she leaves the bridge of the damaged frigate.

PLANETSIDE

DMDC

As Halsey exits the lift with John-117 and the rest of blue team, she notices a large six foot nine figure in ODST armor near the lift doors standing next to another that was about the same height. They both turn and Halsey recognizes both. Richard Xanders and former Spartan trainee Peter-110.

"Well, who do i owe this pleasure to? I haven't seen either of you in ages." Halsey says.

"Neither have we Doctor. This was supposed to be a simple milk run, not a small-scale battle." Rex says.

"Yes, it was. For all of us." Halsey says as the group starts walking down a corridor.

Then a Spartan in Navy blue camo combat fatigues walks up to Rex's left side. A small square in the center of his chest and collar is that of a Petty Officer First Class, the equivalent to a Sergeant in the Marines.

"Sir, what was that craft?" The Petty Officer asks.

"Classified. All will be explained eventually. May i have your name, Petty Officer?" Rex asks.

"Petty Officer First Class John Sierra-117 sir." The Spartan says, snapping off a salute.

"Relax, i'm not like most standard brass. I tend to call my men by their names. No rank, no 'sir', no saluting. Just names. By the way, i'm First Lieutenant Richard Xanders." Rex says, holding out his hand.

The Spartan takes it and they shake. 117 is stunned at the strength in the ODST's hand. It was enough to rival Jorge Sierra-052, one of the biggest and strongest Spartans in the program. What perplexed him was that he had never seen the Lieutenant before during training or around the bases that they had been stationed at.

Then they enter a room. Inside, multiple AIs and numerous techs were working on several different objects around the room. Doctor Halsey clears her throat and the techs turn around and the AI's disappear. Then a single holo pops up, showing a detailed example of an armor set.

"Well, here we are. Project MILJONIR. Highly advanced armor with a gel-filled temp-regulating layer, multi-layer alloy, biometer, a moisture-absorbing bodysuit on the inside, and a neural-implant link. This, is your new toy, Spartans." Halsey says as the Spartans look over their new armor.

Then Halsey walks over to Pete and Rex. She takes them both to two sets of black armor.

"Pete, Rich, i have these set aside for you. It has the same shell as standard-issue ODS armor. It's lighter and thinner than the other models. Now, that doesn't mean that it has almost the same protection with the addition of some...classified parts. This is so it doesn't spike suspicions outside those who already know about your... 'condition'. It is roughly on par with the Spartan model, but it is different due to your...unique position. You can carry more ammo, more weight than a standard gear pack has, a full AI friendly computer and tac-pad system linked to the HUD and COM, and, it's based off of the armor that you had...tested, during your...adventures with... 'them', Rex. That's where we got the idea and tech for the additions. It can also withstand the impact induced by a free-fall from several hundred thousand feet to a few kilometers off the deck." Halsey explains as she stands next to two sets of black armor.

"Such as a HALO or HAHO jump, right?" Pete asks.

"Yes, or an emergency para-jump from a Pelican or ship in low orbit, say, in the mesosphere or stratosphere area. Your troopers will be receiving armor that looks similar and will help them out with weight distribution, stamina increase, some strength increase, and endurance. That way you two won't raise suspicions " Halsey says.

As Rex looks at the armor, and he does find multiple similarities in both sets that resemble his old trooper armor. The chest plates and armor plating looked almost identical to what had been on his old armor. His mind began to wander back 'home' and wondered what Ahsoka was doing and if she had forgotten him.

COURASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

APRIL 2 ABG

Naboo had been successfully defended by the timely arrival of the 327th Star Corps led by General Aayla Secura and the Grand Gungan Army. The 212th and 501st were on a two week extended leave so that their numbers could be put back up to a number that would make them battle-ready. The 327th was on Naboo, helping with re-construction and mopping up the last pockets of resisting enemy in the ruins of Theed.

Obi-Wan and Anakin were being de-briefed by the Council. A standard procedure after a battle was fought or won. Ahsoka, on the other hand, was in the room of a thousand fountains meditating. It was one of the first real breaks from the war she had after Rex had...passed. But, with the revelation that it was a teleporter system, he might have just disappeared. Just as the daughter had told her.

She let herself flow into the force. It's waves carried her and she felt at peace. It felt like he was at home. Then she was given a vision. A large and very advanced city near a body of water. Wheeled vehicles went along large and small, narrow and wide pathways marked with various colors of lines, different signs with arrows and other

markings, some vehicles were on the side of the pathways with flashing blue, red, white and yellow lights. It felt like a normal day.

Then she saw a female togruta with a human/togruta child. They entered a large tower structure and entered a lift. She soon found herself inside a very expensive looking apartment. A large window looks out over the body of water with a fair-sized deck. A full kitchen sits to the right of the door.

The child disappears into a room down a hallway. The togruta enters an office and a holo-pic of a group of some sort of troopers and an armored being is on a wall with a large frame with medals and other objects. A blonde haired man stands in the center in front of a desk, looking over papers in an office. Then the togruta walks behind and 'ambushes' a blonde/brown haired man, giving him a hug and a kiss near the back of his neck. The man turns around and it was Rex. Then she saw the togruta's face, and it was herself.

It was exactly what she had always dreamed of. Just as she was starting to enjoy the vision, she was yanked out of the vision and back to the present by somebody calling her name. Her eyes snap open and she sees Anakin near her. She blinks a few times and shakes her head.

"You ok Ahsoka?" Anakin asks, concerned.

"Yes Master. I was in deep meditation though." Ahsoka says, sounding a little annoyed.

"Sorry. The Council would like to see you in the main chambers as soon as possible." Anakin says.

Ahsoka stands up and walks off towards the council chambers. Along the way, she passes a group of younglings who she had helped train for a few months while her Master was on a mission with Master Kenobi. They wave at her and she smiles and she waves back.

Then she reaches the large, double doors leading to the chambers. Two Jedi Guards opened the doors and closed them as she entered. She proceeded to the center of the room and bowed.

"Padawan Tano, it is to our understanding that you led the 501st in an attack on two CIS compounds without your Master present. Do you have anything to say?" Master Windu asks.

"Yes Master. I did what I could with the resources available and carried out what the Force guided me to do. If Master Skywalker didn't mention this before, Rish Loo is the weapons developer we attempted to capture in which Captain CT-7567, or Rex, and most of the 501st were killed. The rings seen are teleporters. They are able to transport large masses of material from planet to planet without detection. That possibly includes Coruscant." Ahsoka says.

Several of the council members shift in their seats, suddenly uncomfortable.

"And why would this be, padawan?" Windu asks.

"The parts seem to be shipped to their destinations in crates marked

medical gear, foodstuffs, ship and speeder parts, and even...even childrens toys. The same crates were also found in the armory with broken-down blasters and other weapons with detailed assembly and operating instructions." Ahsoka says.

"Thank you for this information. Your Masters report had the parts being found, but not what they were for. Now, back to why we really called you here for." Windu says.

Ahsoka stands there paitently awaiting the true subject of why the called her before them.

"Knighthood, the council has granted you, Padawan." Master Yoda says.

Ahsoka instantly sobers up and her head snaps up.

"On the front, be, you will not. A teacher, you will be, in the Temple." Master Yoda says.

"Master, if i may, why am i not being assigned to a front line unit?" Ahsoka asks.

"A jedi recently passed into the force while you, your former Master, and Master Kenobi were on Naboo. They taught combat techniques with and without lightsabers. You will take over the class within two weeks. You're dismissed, Knight Tano." Windu says.

Ahsoka leaves, shocked that she was now a Knight and was to teach younglings and padawans in combat techniques. She was excited, but was too deep in shock to show it. As she leaves the chambers, her Master is waiting nearby.

"What did they want Ahsoka?"

"They wanted my version of what happened on Naboo and any intel gathered." Ahsoka says.

"There's something else, isn't there?" Anakin asks.

"Yes. I'm no longer a padawan. I've been knighted." Ahsoka says.

Anakin envelops her in a crushing hug. He lets go and beams with pride.

"That's wonderful Ahsoka. Where are you assigned?" He asks.

"I'll be teaching a combat class here at the temple and supervise a group of younglings and padawans. I won't be on the front lines commanding an active combat unit or at an outpost." Ahsoka says.

17. Chapter 17

CHI-CETI SYSTEM

DMDC

MAY 2545

Rich, Pete, and the Spartans were suited up in thier new armor systems. The Spartans were issued brand new MA5C's. These MA5C's were modified to fire the .390 round of the MA2 line. The MA2's were used for covert operations where more stopping power and specilized rounds would be needed. To the dismay of many in the UNSC, the MA2 was in short supply, so request forms had to be filled out to have them issued. The rounds, however, were more common due to the hunting rifles in the colonies used by those on farms and those who hunted.

The .390 rounds came in four military-grade versions, an High Explosive-High Velocity Sabot(HE-HVS), sabot tracer(ST), Armor-Piercing(AP), and shredder rounds(FR). The shredder round would hit a target and fragment. The fragmenting of the round would mean no lethal debris would exit the target.

Both of the sabot rounds were designed for maximum range and inflict maximum dammage to armored targets and disable and/or distroy small to mid-sized vehicles, such as a civillian coupe up to a military-grade Warthog or pannel truck. But, the ST round was for heavy gunners and sniper/spotters only to identify targets.

Rich had his MA5D modified to the .390 and used the HE-HVS rounds. Pete, or 'Hulk' as the others called him, carried a M739 SAW with the .390, but had a one to five ratio with the ST and AP rounds in drum mags.

On the elevator back up to the top, all the techs from groundside had grabbed all vital material and intel. The base would be distroyed after the Trojan would leave the system, courtesy of two nuclear mines inside the base, set to blow with other smaller, seperate charges.

As they reached the top, the Spartans headed to the Commonwealth, which was now at minimal operating status, the MAC gun was offline, as were the majority of the weapons. The only weapons left were four point-defence turrets and re-stocked Archer pods. It's armor was mostly melted away from enemy fire.

The Commonwealth had been gutted out, everything but electronic suties, wiring, engines, and weapons, were now in a reserve hanger on the Trojan. The Commonwealth left it's docking collar and headed twards the enemy. The lone xeno ship's FTL drive appeared to be dammaged and was moving slower than it had been.

Rich watched the entire thing play out from the Trojan's bridge as the enemy vessel was distroyed in only a few minutes by an internal explosion. Then Commonwealth's engines finnaly died and it started to drift after sustaining major dammage. Commander Keyes turned from where he had been standing right next to Rich and went to a holo-screen.

"Alright, time to recover our Spartans. We still have to load up some supplies. Rich, take a Pelican with five others and go get them." Keyes orders.

"Yes sir, wat if we find...remains?" Rich asks.

"Get them also. I'm not leaving a single body out there if i can help it." Keyes orders.

"Will do." Rich says as he leaves for the hanger.

On the way, he grabs Pete, Stacker, Lucas, Johnson, and Perez. They boarded a Pelican and set out, searching the wreckage for survivors. After about twenty minutes, nothing had been found yet.

"Anything on the scopes, pilot?" Rich asks.

"Nada Liutenaunt. All i'm getting is static on all channels i can acess, radar is not even worth checking due to the amount of debris, and all the rest are going nuts, or not responding due to interferences." The pilot says.

"Damn!" Rich says, punching the cockpit doorframe lightly, but it still caused a small dent to form.

"Hold it, i'm picking up something faint." Says the co-pilot.

"Where?" Perez asks, walking into the cockpit.

"Over that way. Louie, change course to...point two-five." The co-pilot says.

Louie, the pilot, changes course and a light shines off of purple-colored debris and other objects. At the source is a fair sized section of ship. The Pelican curcles the object, and finds nothing.

"You sure about that contraptions readings Dan? There's nothing here but that...thing." Louie says.

"Positive, i've been on S&R before, and i've found live people in sections of ships that have curled around them and shielded them from any sort of injury." Dan says.

"Take another look. It's not that part of the ship, it's below it." Rich says as he looks at the console.

"Hey, he's right. Go down a bit. I got one, no, make that two contacts." Dan says.

The Pelican sinks down and two Spartans in a locked embrace are seen. One's armor on thier back was totaly singed black and melted a bit.

"Holy shit. That is one crispy critter." Says Louie the pilot.

Rich smacks the pilot on the back of the head as light as he could.

"Ouch! Alright, alright, alright! No need to get violent Liutenaunt! I'm swingin' her around now."

The Pelican swings around and Johnson, Rich, and Pete grab the two Spartans and haul them through an air-lock that was placed onto the back of the pelican's extended troop bay. They were unconcious, but

according to a scan run covertly by Mel, they were both alive and well. It was Petty Officer 1st Class John-117 and Petty Officer 3rd Class Kelly-087. The only two survivors out of fifteen sent to the xeno craft. The rest of Blue Team, aka Thunder Four-actual, were aboard the Trojan.

They would have to be separated by a team of techs and combat engineers with heavy equipment. This is due to that on closer inspection by Rex and the others, the two Spartans armor were fused together. Their armor would have to be repaired or replaced entirely.

As the gunship touched down in the hanger, Petty Officer 2nd Class Fredric Sierra-104 was beyond nervous. The ship had been gone a long time and hasn't contacted the ship until it had just arrived. The doors on the back part and a Gunnery Sergeant motions for a group of engineers with a fairly large portable lift to move forward. They attach the lift to something inside and towed it back out slowly with assistance from a deck vehicle used to ferry supplies and help move craft into various positions.

Two Spartans in armor appear. They are fused together and the larger ones back is totally blackened. Then the ODSTs leave the Pelican. The Gunny removes his helmet, pulls out a Williams, and lights it. A large First Lieutenant emerges and removes his helmet as well. He is offered a Williams by the Gunny. The LT accepts it and a light from another Gunny who exited the craft and had lit his own brand of cig. A Staff Sergeant and another LT had left the hanger.

Then the door opens and Doctor Halsey followed by several techs and combat engineers start working on the two suits of armor. He walks closer but the smoking LT stops him. A gutsy move for anybody.

"Relax, Petty Officer, they're alive. You'll just get in the way of them trying to get those two out of those armor suits." The LT says.

Fredric reads the LT's name off of a HUD projected onto a monicle eye-piece. Richard Xanders, UNSCDF HIGHCOM Intel and SpecWarf unit Thunder. The file also gave him the security clearance of a Fleet-grade Admiral.

"Yes sir. Sorry sir."

"No need to apologize, Spartan." Lieutenant Xanders says.

"Did you find any others sir?" Petty Officer 3rd Class Linda Sierra-058 asks as she walks up.

"No. No, we did not Petty Officer. Nothing but dust, echos, and debris left of what once was. Head to your quarters and take the rest of the day off. Tell your comrades the same. I'll ask Doctor Halsey to inform you of any changes." Xanders says.

"Sir, where are we going now?" A Spartan asks.

"Back to Reach. The Commonwealth has to be taken back there for decommission or repair. Your peers are also waiting for a mass briefing on our new adversary. Then you'll be assigned to different

units or ships."

TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM HERE FORWARD. PLEASE ASK IF TIME CHANGE NEEDS TO BE EXPLAINED

CORASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

JUNE 2 ABG

It had been about 3 months since Ahsoka had been promoted to Knightship and was given a class to teach at the Jedi Temple. The class was somewhat easy, but each youngling and padawan carried thier own strengths and weaknesses. Ahsoka did her best to help each student find thier weaknesses and how to overcome them while utilizing thier strengths at the same time.

She was conducting her classes very well. She often drew and fell back to lessons taught to her by Rex as she would observe him in battle or when he would help train her in specilized combat tehniques. Every day she would look at a holo-still of him and re-read his final and only letter to her.

She still missed Rex, even after half a year since he had gone somewhere out of her reach. Even the Force couldn't find him, which said alot. She still wore his tags arund her neck wherever she went. His things were stowed underneath her bed and some of his clothing had become her favorite sleeping shirts.

The Temple was mostly empty these days. Most of the jedi had either died in battle or were on the front. The only ones there were the younglings, some master-less padawans, teachers, record-keepers, the High Council, the Temple Gaurds, and some employees and troopers. But, it was her home.

It was the start of a new day and another round of classes. She had just finished her moning routine and was heading for the dining hall for her morning meal before her classes began. Her former Master and Master Kenobi were already back at the front lines.

She got her food and sat down in her usual spot. She removed and folded her dark brown cloak up beside her. She had changed her clothing to light brown and black robes which had some spare armor plates she had found that had been Rex's. They still had the blue stripes on the gauntlets and chest plate, which she had modified and left in her 'grab bag', which was in her quarters.

She also had a unige weapon hoilstered on her belt. A smaller version of Rex's DC-17's. One he had used when he was out of uniform and walking the streets. It was all a reminder of what she stood for and the person she cared the most for. As she sat and ate, a familiar face also sat down across from her after a few minutes. It was Barriss Offee, the current padawan of Master Luminara Unduli.

"Ahsoka? Is that you?" Barriss asks.

"Yes it is Barriss."

"When did you get knighted?" She asks, noticing the absence of a silka-bead braid and the colors of her robes.

"About three months ago. I've been teaching younglings about combat with and without lightsabers, so i've been away from the front." Ahsoka says.

"Then that explains why i didn't see you with Master Skywalker a few weeks ago." Barriss says.

"How is he doing woithout me there with him?" Ahsoka asks.

"He's doing well enough. He had started to say your name durring a briefing and caught himself. I was able to talk to a Captain called Fives, he said that it had changed more than he and some others had liked. I had no idea until now." Barriss says.

"Yeah, it's alot different now." Ahsoka says, putting down her fork and leaning back, thinking of Rex.

"Why? Something wrong?" Barriss asks.

"Yeah. The former Captain of the 501st died durring an explosion about half a year ago. He taught me a lot of what i know and i was starting to become...attatched. More than i should have. I miss him so much." Ahsoka admits.

"He's still around Ahsoka. He lives with you now. He's part of your memories, teaching, and more importantly, he's all around you in the Force. There's no reason to miss him. Am i right?" Barriss asks.

"Yeah, i guess you are. Thanks, Barriss." Ahsoka says.

"Anytime, Master Tano." Barriss says, winking an eye.

"Now that's a tittle i'm still not used too, even after three months of hearing it almost everyday." Ahsoka says, her mood completely flipped around.

18. Chapter 18

CHAPTER IS SHORTER THAN USUAL. NEXT WILL BE LONGER. A TWIST WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED.

>JUST TRY AND GUESS WHAT IT IS! MWAHAHAHAH!<p>

UNSC TERRITORY

FEBRUARY 2546

It had began. Admiral Cole's fleet arrived at a staging ground a fair distance from the Harvest system just in time for a dammaged CMA distroyer named the Heracles to jump into the area. Admiral Cole contacted the ship and asked what had happened. His answer came when the surviving crew of the distroyer gave him two recon drones. One had the markings of HIGHCOM's new Special Operations, Intel, and Tactics group(SWIT), and the other had the markings of ONI Section Three.

The two drones had documented all activity since it's launch. Internally housed cameras captured both leaving a black ship which was heading towards a large group of civilian ships. Then they registered an explosion and captured images of the space elevator imploding and falling to the planet below. Then, several days later, it captured two ships entering the system and entering the planet's atmosphere.

He went in, MAC guns warmed and weapons charged and set. The fleet caught the unknown enemy at the planet in low orbit. The enemy was trapped between the planet and fleet with their pants down. Then a transmission was received and recorded. Then the xenos opened up. They fought hard and Cole eventually triumphed as all ships fired their weapons at once. The slug-fest begun. Harvest became the site for what looked like a battle out of the early 20th century.

Trenches, destroyed buildings, downed ships, artillery firing non-stop, and horrendous casualties. And it was still going, on space and on the surface. In other areas, minor and moderate skirmishes were occurring on a regular basis. The Cole Protocol was hatched after a damaged Navy vessel did a direct jump to another planet, and was followed.

The planet was attacked. The civilians were able to escape and the planet was black listed from all nav charts and was lost. Several other planets were also given up as lost after patrols finding the planets destroyed by the enemy during routine patrols or the total loss of communication.

Thunder Company and the crew of the UNSC Trojan had just fought on Harvest along with Cole and a unit of Spartan-II's called Blue Team, which was imbedded with the company temporarily until ONI decided to give them their own separate missions. Commander Keyes had been transferred to an academy after Harvest so that he could teach ship commanders on the tactics of the so-called 'Covenant'.

Thunder and the Trojan were on their way back to HIGHCOM HQ-E(arth) from Harvest. Since Commander Keyes had been transferred, another seasoned Lieutenant Commander named Dominique de Lafayette had taken over. Commander Lafayette was a descendent from an early military master from the late 18th century who helped form the United Republic of North America(URNA), formerly known as the United States.

He had lived in the URNA and was going to a university for astrophysics in Paris when his oldest sister, a Marine, had been killed during the Insurrection. Then he went to the Navy and became a solid and dependable officer. He had been taught by Commander Keyes personally when he had taught a few classes on Mars in his early days in the Navy and was recommended by him to take over as CO of the Trojan.

Rex had just finished his morning routine when he was summoned to the bridge. Unlike most UNSC ships, the crew and occupants of the Trojan didn't need to go into cryo. This was due to an experimental slipspace drive that was faster than most. The next generation of UNSC ships would be receiving the new drive within the next few years.

He entered the bridge and walked up to LC Lafayette.

"You rang sir?" Rex asks.

"Yes i did Liutenant. Are you fammliar with the Corbulo Military Science Academy on Circinius IV?"

"Not really sir. But my Second Liutenaunts may be. Why?"

"According to an ONI report, the Covenant are in the general area. We're going in with two Charon-class frigates. The frigates will evac the civillians after dropping their compliment of ODSTs. We drop from slipspace and arrive at the planet in one hour. I was wondering what you would suggest for ground ops?" The Commander says.

"Well, if it were me sir, i'd take a squad of four to six others, drop to te surface, locate the Academy staff and get them out allong with any surviving cadets, if there are any staff or cadets left alive when we get there." Rex explains.

"But why a squad? Why not a platoon or the entire company?" LC Dominique asks.

"A squad is alot harder to find and can covertly manuvere without much attention than a full platoon or company." Rex tells the Naval officer.

The Liutenaunt Commander had gone directly into a UNSC Naval Academy as soon as he left the Paris University. There, he was taught how to command ships and fight space-bourne battles, not infantry-grade unit maneuvers, let alone special operation tactics.

"Alright then. Take CPO 117 and two of his team in addition to your squad. If they hit the Academy, it'll more than likely be in mass."

About an hour later, planetside in the Academy grounds, Rex, Stacker, PO1 James 'Doc' Obrian, Sarge Peter 'Hulk' Kowalski, the newly-promoted CPO-117, PO-087 and PO-104 had all dropped into the Academy. Just after they had landed, the space elevator fell. As they moved though the academy, they found bodies, scotch marks, and rubble.

"Stay close. Keep an eye and ear out for anything out of place." Rex says as they enter a barrack-style dorm corridor.

"LT, this body looks like it was a fresh kill." Says Syacker as he spots a body that they had just passed.

The body was sliced across the chest by some sort of weapon, one Rex knew all to well. An energy blade.

"Alright, hand signals and internal coms only. No un-nessecary noises. We have an Elite wandering the area."

ID tag lights on the bottom of his hud flash green. As they move through the partially decimated barrack, an echo sounds.

"Hey! Guys, run!" And then the shot of a weapon.

Rex snaps into action and races down the hall with Hulk, the Chief

and Stacker just behind him. Both of 117's comrades and the Doc had brought down a Pelican and had secured an LZ. They round the corner and see a Zealot moving towards something behind an alcove.

Rex charges the creature and tackles it with Pete and Stacker. It turned into quite a scuffle. The Chief then jumped into the fray as the elite was able to throw Rex and Stacker a few feet away from it.

"Shit! Damn thing sure can throw, eh LT?"

"Yeah, tell me about it."

"SHIIIIIT!" Shouts somebody as Hulk hurtles into a bulkhead, denting it, one right above Stacker and Rex.

"Alright! That's it! You wanna see what one puny human can do!?" Rex shouts as he charges the Zealot, knocking it back down, pulls his combat blade, shoves it into the Elite's mouth and twists. It jerks violently and goes still. Rex gets back up, sheaths the blade, helps the Chief back up, and turns just in time to see Hulk help Stacker.

"That, was one 'ell of a fight Lieutenant." Says Hulk.

"Ye-contact!" Rex says, drawing his M6C and aiming at something behind Stacker and Hulk.

Helmet lamps and flashlights illuminate the area as side-arms, rifles, and SAWs (Squad Automatic Weapon-H4) are aimed at the movement. The lights reveal four dirt and dust-coated cadets huddled together.

"What in the...cadets?" Stacker asks.

"We need to get moving. They'll notice their boss is missing and go searching for him. Chief, Hulk, get these weapon and armor lockers open. Stacker, watch the door." Rex orders.

"Wh...who are you?" Asks one of two male cadets, whose nameplate reads Sullivan.

"Doesn't matter. What does is us getting out of here alive. Armor up and grab weapons." Rex says.

The cadets get up and out of the alcove just in time to see the Chief and Hulk rip the locked doors of a gun rack, ammo, and armor storage units clean off their hinges.

"Holy crap..." Murmurs Sullivan.

As the cadets finished armoring up, Stacker notified the others about their discovery of the four cadets.

"Sir? Why are you here?" One asks Cadet Orenski they strap on a chest-plate.

"You're the only survivors." Rex responds.

"Only survivors? You mean, of the Academy?" Asks another female with

a tag that says Silva.

"No. The entire planet." Says Stacker as he looks out the door frame.

Soon, the entire group of eight were moving towards one of the exits. A cadet named Lasky had been silent the entire time. Then they reached the door leading out the ruined academy grounds. Rex brought his rifle up to his shoulder and scanned the adjacent rooftop. Cadet Lasky does the same and stops.

"Sir, what the hell is that...thing up there?" He asks, rifle aimed at a shadow on the roof.

Rex looks down his rifle and spots what he was talking about.

"You got a good eye cadet. That would be a hostile sniper team leader. Surprised you even saw him. There's four others up there, including him." Rex says.

"Yeah...but what the hell is it called?" Lasky asks.

"You'll be briefed on the ship. All four of you. The Insurrection is over, our fight to exist has begun."

About an hour later, all four cadets were aboard the Trojan. Lasky had taken a purple-pink spike to the side in the process of saving Cadet Chyler Silva, Sullivan took a sniper round to the leg, Silva got some scrapes and a mild concussion from an explosion a while after Lasky saved her, and Cadet April Orenski had been thrown from a moving Warthog and recieved a dislocated leg and broken arm. All four were now aboard the Trojan in the med-bay.

Lasky was watching from his bed as Liutenaunt Xanders was telling him and his comrades about what attacked Corbulo and Circinius IV. But first, he told them about Harvest and Admiral Cole.

"So, let me get this straight. A group of aliens calling themselves the Covenant, have attacked the Human race just because we exist?" Asks Orenski, who was beyond furious due to that her home had been Harvest before the Academy.

"There's more to it than that. They are religious zealots. We are apparently an affront to thier gods, and thier 'gods' apparently want us all dead and our worlds decimated." The Liutenaunt explains.

"What's going to happen to us then?" Silva asks.

"Your deployment orders have been sent to me as of yesterday. Cadet Sullivan, you will be going to flight school to fly Longswords and Broadsword fighters, Cadet Orensky, you'll be going to the Marines to learn how to command of a platoon. Cadets Lasky and Silva will be staying aboard the Trojan. You are now Ensigns and will learn how operate systems on warships. You will also learn ground combat tactics from myself and a few of my men. We arrive back at Earth in about two days. Congrats, you've all graduated as officers into the Unted Nations Space Command." The Liutenaunt says, after reading of thier assignments from a wrist-mounted tac-pad.

19. Chapter 19

\-\-\-\-4 YEARS SINCE CORBULO-2 SINCE NABOO
CAMPAIGN-/-/-/-/

COURASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

JUNE 4 ABG

Ahsoka was excited. She had just been tasked to escort a group of padawan younglings to retrieve their lightsaber crystals in the caves of Iillum, a snow-coated ice-world in the outter rim. The younglings would be making their first lightsabers to replace the training ones at the temple. The students had been the same ones she had been teaching for a little over a year now. They were learning fast. She was no Cin Drallig, but she was considered one of the best teachers in the temple.

She was packing her things for the five to six day round-trip journey. When they landed, she would meet Master Yoda who had already left from a meditative retreat to a swamp planet somewhere in the mid to outter rim territories. She didn't know why, but she felt the force was attempting to say something, but was being muffled.

But she paid no attention due to her bursting in excitement and pride in her first class of younglings on becoming padawans. She had just boarded the cruiser docked outside the temple and was storing her gear. Her students were about to board. The only other beings aboard the ship were a crew of an astromech pilot, 5 pit droids that wandered the maintenance bays and corridors, a protocol droid, a medical droid, and a centuries old droid professor named Huyang that knew how to craft lightsabers.

These trips were usually kept low-key and without clone escorts, which was due to a group of wookiee-type creatures joining the CIS and beginning to fight. Little did she and the rest of the Republic know, they would witness an event that would change the galaxy.

2550-6th YEAR OF HUMAN-COVENANT WAR

EARTH

ORBITAL DEFENCE PLATFORM(ODP) NEW YORK

JUNE 2550

Rex had just finished attending an awards and promotions ceremony held by the UNSC for the second largest major victory against the Covenant since Harvest five years ago. A new but old adversary had appeared with the Covenant. CIS battle droids configured to fire Covenant weapons. The planet had been saved and the Covenant and droids eliminated after about two full months of fighting.

Thunder had been at the front of it all and took the initial actions by taking and securing vital positions inside the planets largest city and capitol until reinforcements arrived about half a week to about two months into the battle via several Halcyon-class cruisers,

Paris, and Charon-class frigates, and several destroyers. With the combined strength of just under five regiments at the battles end, the fight was quickly turned to the UNSC.

Each house, street, block, and district had to be cleared of any and all resistance. The attending Covenant fleet consisting of mostly CIS ships commanded by four Covenant warships had scattered after four Halcyon-class ships showed up with a rare sight. A Vindication-class battleship that had just been deployed from the shipyards of Reach. Most of the Covenant on the ground were the dreaded Brutes and very few Elites. Usually, it was the other way around and the Elites were in command with the Brutes in reserve.

That and the unusually small fleet set off alarm bells for Rex. The Covenant were now being pushed out of the Inner colonies and some parts of the outer colonies. It was unnatural that the Covenant wouldn't send reinforcements. It was also strange that some Elite-led Covenant were surrendering instead of fighting to the death like what was the norm.

The battles were also becoming less frequent and not as hard to fight. The Covenant had either found themselves at war with another enemy, their morale being affected by the seemingly endless war, or some sort of leadership struggle inside their ranks.

As the ceremony ended, Lord Hood walked up to Rex, who had been awarded a colonial cross and had been skip-promoted to Colonel for his actions during the four month long battle.

"I hear you have some theories about the Covenant, Rich. I'd like to hear them." Lord Hood asks.

"Well sir, you know what I was when I first arrived here, so I won't beat around the bush. Those mechs, I've fought them before I arrived here. I had fought them for almost three years before I was blown up and transported by some type of device to here. And I believe I've found out how they've gotten here and I think the Covenant is now where I came from."

"But where are they doing this transition of forces?" Hood asks.

"Harvest. It was the first place hit and the hardest battle that they put up. We also pulled out about just under a year after we took it back after gathering our dead. Mel also found Harvest's coordinates on a mechs data-recorder." Rex says.

"So you think they've returned and are doing this transition right under our very noses?" Hood asks.

"Yes sir, I do." Rex says.

"Alright then. I'll have a fleet assembled at Reach and ready to go by the time we get there." Hood says.

"S-sir? We?" Rex says, surprised that the Grand Admiral and de-facto leader of the UNSC and UEG said we.

"Yes, we. I want to be able to see these mechs personally. The Trojan will be the flagship of the fleet." Lord Hood says,

smirking.

"Flagship? Of what fleet?" Says a now Commander Lafayette as he wanders closer.

"Commander Lafayette, Colonel Xanders has a theory about the Covenant and these new mechs we've been fighting. It's been backed by a mech having the coordinates of a planet that is well known to us. We'll be going in to eliminate them and follow these mechs back to their origin. Then we'll concentrate on whatever Covenant-allied hostiles we find there." Hood says.

"How big will the fleet be sir?"

"At least the size of the one that went to Harvest with Cole. We'll have two carriers, the Enterprise and Hornet, two battleships, the Reach, and the Sol, multiple cruisers, several destroyers, and a few Paris and Stalwart-class frigates bringing up the rear for logistics support. We'll have to inform ONI and they may send a Prowler or two with some of their people. Then there's the Trojan. The Trojan will be the tip of the spear and the flagship." The Admiral says.

"But isn't she too small to be a flagship?" Lafayette asks.

"Any ship larger than a fighter can be a flagship, Commander. I chose the Trojan because she's stealthier, better armed, and faster than a carrier. The enemy will target the carriers or battleships first, that's where the Admirals usually are. Knock out the commander..." Hood says.

"And the rest fall like dominoes." Rex says, finishing the Admirals sentence.

"Exactly." Hood says.

HYPERSPACE

EN ROUTE TO COURASAUNT

JUNE 4 ABG

The younglings had passed the test. They now had their crystals. One of the students, Petro, was being checked out by the medical droid aboard. He had been the last out of the crystal cave and was being treated for potential signs of hypothermia and frostbite. The other five, Ganodi, Katooni, Byph, Gungi, and Zatt were waiting outside the med-bay.

[According to my scans, the patient has no signs of hypothermia or frostbite.] The droid says.

"Good. Let's go Petro. The others are waiting." Ahsoka says as Petro jumps off a table and heads towards the door.

Outside, the five other Jedi younglings surrounded and started badgering Petro with questions.

"Quiet!" Ahsoka says, her voice stimulated with a bit of help from the Force. She always hated yelling at her students. The group instantly quieted down.

"Now, Petro doesn't have any serious medical issues. If you will follow me, i have somebody to introduce you to." Ahsoka says.

She walks down the corridor and hears six sets of feet behind her. She eventually reaches their destination. She opens the door and the younglings follow her inside.

"Professor Huyang!" She yells.

The room is filled with tall drawers and storage units that go from floor to ceiling. Then the sound of mechanical footsteps sounds and a tall droid with multiple arms appears from a cluster of storage units.

[Ah, Knight Tano. These are the ones who are getting their first lightsabers i presume?] The droid asks.

"Yes they are. Younglings, meet Professor Huyang. The Professor here has made and designed many lightsabers over many years. So lng, in fact, that he's even made Master Yodas lightsaber when he was your age. He even helped me make mine." Ahsoka says.

[Hump. Well, looks like you've managed to inflate my ego even more, Miss Tano. Well, let's see...] The Professor starts sifting through a digital trove of lightsaber designs and models.

Several minutes later, all six have their saber parts and are attempting to put them together. Then a pit droid rushes up to Ahsoka as she watches from a short distance. It's beeping and whistling is frantic and is excited as it gestures towards the bridge.

"Younglings! Give your crystals to Professor Huyang. You know the drill Professor!" Ahsoka says as she runs out the room and towards the bridge.

"Where is Master Tano going?" Asks Katooni.

[Pirates. She has to get to the bridge and send a distress call. We, on the other hand, must get to a hidden room on the ship before they board. We must hurry!] Says the Professor as the younglings give him their cyrstals. The ancient droid locks them up inside his torso with the lightsaber parts that were brought out for each of the six customized sabers.

The droid leads the group towards the safe room, but is cut off by a band of short, stubby creatures withh large metal tanks and green-glowing weapons drawn. The six creatures fire at the professor, decapitating him.

[I have lived over three thousand years, and i have never seen such rudness from creatures your size!] He yells as he grabs one by it's head, and tosses it down the hall. It screams and it hits something and falls to the floor.

It impacted into a wookiee-type creature armed with a pike-style weapon. The smaller creature gets up and starts squealing and gesturing down the hall. The larger creature follows it and comes face-to-face with Huyang and the six younglings. It roars. Huyang

stops in his place, a second and third smaller creature by his other appendages.

[Oh my...] Huyang says as his body turns to face the giant.

"Put them down or be crushed, mech." The creature says in perfect galactic basic.

Huyang quickly drops the two creatures. They get up, run, and hide behind the first one who had a black suit, tank, and mask on. It also had it's weapon recovered and ready to fire.

"Let go of me you pirate!" Shouts a female voice as a group of six pirates half push and half walk another person to the area.

The female turns out to be Ahsoka with a set of stun-cuffs on. An astromech, protocol, and the pit droids follow being escorted by several battle droids armed with E-5 blasters and the same weapons as the small creatures were armed with. A weekway pirate in dark red armor walks up to the large pike-wielding creature.

"The jedi mannaged to get a signal off before we were able to get into the bridge Chieftan. A green jedi fighter was caught by the scanners but was able to get away. Our Captain believes it was the Head Master of the Jedi." The pirate says.

"Take the prisoners to the ship. Make sure they do not have a chance to escape. The Prophets will be very angry if they are able to get away from you." The 'Chieftan' says.

"Yes Chieftan." The Weekway then signals and more battle droids appear and put stun-cuffs on the Jedi younglings and leave with them in escort.

"What about the droids sir?" The Weekway asks.

"Force them to work on our ships. Spread them out into the fleet. Keep that combative mech with the organic prisnoners. Weld is head back on. All is going to plan. Soon, the heritics here will fall and the heritics of old, specters, and demons will be erradicated soon after." The Chieftan says.

HARVEST

ORBIT

JUNE 2550

The fleet had assembled at Reach's orbital docks and was ready to go. The fleet was given the designation of the First Sol Offensive Fleet. The entire fleet had massed for te jup to Harvest. Each ship had brand new slipspace engines, new weapons developed by Doctor Halsey with help from some blueprints provded by Colonel Xanders and reverse-engineered Covenant tech.

The fleet had encountered a fair sized hostile fleet above Harvest. It was made up of five Covanant ships and over ten CIS ships. The CIS ships fell with ease and all the Covenant ships appart from a prisoner transport were distroyed. Rex, Thunder, and the Spartans were about to board the vessel and free any UNSC prisoners

aboard.

\Breach in five, four, three, two, one...contact!\ Shouts demolition expert Private First Class Dawn 'Pyro' O'Reilly as she detonates a breaching charge.

That section of Thunder was responsible for breaching the center port section of the craft. At the same time, other sections of Thunder, SpecWarf teams, Spartan-II fireteams, and the newly revealed Spartan-III fireteams would enter the ship at separate points to create confusion inside the ship.

Rex stormed into the corridor with Sergeant Peter 'Hulk' Kowalski as his 'wingman'. They would break off from the main groups and be 'rovers'. Rex and Hulk each carried packs with extra M7 SMGs, M6G, and D magnums with clips in ammo slings. Their job was to free prisoners and give them arms and ammo.

As they move into a cell block, they use their helmets advanced VISR system to eliminate the guards and scan the prisoners in the block's cells. One prisoner made Hulk stop in his tracks. The man's neural implant identified him as 03956-26127-PC.

"Colonel! You better have a look at this one!" Hulk shouts.

Rex jogs over after de-activating the cells. UNSC Marines and Naval personnel emerge and grab weapons from one of six bags and form fireteams.

"Jesus H Christ. ODS'Ts? Where the hell did you come from?" Asks a bearded man with greying black hair as he emerges from his cell.

[Holy shit! That's Admiral Preston J Cole!] Mel shouts over Hulk and Rex's internal com.

"Admiral Cole!?" Hulk shouts in disbelief.

The room instantly quiets down and everybody snaps to attention, saluting the previously thought dead Admiral.

"At ease. You didn't answer my question, son. Where did you come from?" Cole asks.

"Sir, we're part of Operation Payback. The Covenant have been pushed back from the Inner colonies to Harvest, which you are above now. The Operation is taking the fight to the Covenant. You'll be briefed by Lima Theta Hotel (Lord Hood) as soon as we free more prisoners." Rex explains.

"What's your rank trooper?" Cole says, instantly alert.

"Colonel sir. I work directly for Lima Theta Hotel and Hotel India Gama Hotel Charlie Omega Hotel (HIGHCOM)."

"Well, give me a weapon and let's move!" Cole orders.

The prisoners cheer and Rex hands the Admiral an extra M6C with HE rounds and a holster. The Admiral is handed a pair of black HUD glasses by a Lieutenant.

The group leaves that cell block and moves toward another. In about two hours, the entire ship had been liberated. The second highest ranking prisoner turned out to be a Marine Captain. All other officers were assumed to have been killed. Rex and Hulk escort Admiral Cole to the Trojan.

"So, let me get this straight, The Covenant just stopped pushing earlier this year?"

"Correct sir." Rex says.

"And what year is this?" Cole asks.

"2550 sir. Sixth year since the start." Hulk says.

Then the doors to the bridge open and they walk in. Lord Hood is leaning against a tactical display of the fleet.

"Lord Hood, the Colonel's back." Says Commander Lafayette.

Lord Hood looks up and his eyebrows raise and he straightens his back.

"Who is your...guest, Colonel?" Hood asks, suspicious of the bearded man in a faded UNSC naval uniform wearing HUD glasses.

"Terence, I thought you would have recognized me. But, it has been six long years." Cole says.

Lord Hood's eyes widen. He instantly recognized the voice.

"...Preston Cole? What the hell!? Rich, where did you find him!?" Hood asks, shocked.

"Locked inside of a cell block me and Sergeant Kowalski here...liberated. Our manpower had almost doubled from the amount of freed prisoners and they're itching to fight." Rex says.

"Eh, but how the hell did you survive that supernova?" Hood asks.

"Slipspace jump to random coordinates. The jump landed me in the lap of a Covenant fleet with disabled weapons, a dead drive, and most of my ship's crew dead. Took my uniform off and switched them with a Lieutenant. Therefore, when they boarded, they thought I was a Lieutenant instead of the infamous Preston J Cole. Kept me alive for information and just because I was there. I was to be executed on the Covenant 'holy city' in just a few days, but the fleet intercepted the transport before it could get there." Cole explains.

"Well, since you are back and we aren't returning to Sol or Reach for another year or two, I might as well reinstate you. But, I can't give you command of the entire Operation. However, I can give you the carrier UNSC Hornet and the battleship Reach with half the fleet under your command. Since we will be gone for about a year or two, we cannot manage to sacrifice a single ship. We need the room for equipment. Is that clear?" Hood says.

"Crystal sir." Cole says.

"Good. Commander Lafayette, find a taylor aboard any shp in the fleet and get the Admiral here a new uniform and rank tabs from the PX. Also make sure he takes a shower and shaves." Hood orders as he waves his hand in front of him, clearing the air of a...different smell.

Cole shrugs and the Commander leads him out of the bridge with Sergeant Kowalski in escort.

Rex slings his rifle and removes his helmet. His hair is in a well groomed crew cut and is a mix of blonde and a light sandy brown.

"With him back, there's no way the Covenant can win now." Hood says.

"Yes sir. By the way, The Master Chief found at least five blocks filled with Sangheili high-rankers. They apparently tried a mass coup to stop the Covenant from killing us and were deemed heretics and were marked for public execution. They're asking to talk to the 'human Fleetmaster' and want to form a treaty. One of which is the Arbiter. He calls himself Thel 'Vandum instead of Vandmee. I've met him on the battlefield before when he was with the Covenant and he called himself Thel 'Vandumee. The double e means he's recognized as a loyal Covenant follower and devoted to all the 'Hierarchs' preachings and orders." Rex says.

"He's denounced belonging to the Covenant?" Lord Hood asks, incredulous.

"Yes sir, as have all the other Sangheili aboard that transport. They all seem to respect us highly." Rex says.

"Very well, i will see them. But i want you, the Chief, and Cole present when he's finished with getting cleaned up." Hood says.

20. Chapter 20

UNSC TROJAN

SECURED BRIEFING ROOM

JUNE 2550

Lord Hood, Colonel Richard Xanders, Master Chief Sierra-117, and Admiral Preston Cole were in a briefing room with several UNSC Marines posted outside the doors and hidden ODSs from Thunder in side rooms close by. Colonel Xanders had an M7 holstered on a magnetic strip holster across his chest and was sitting on Lord Hood's left. The Master Chief was in a corner behind Admiral Cole with a 10mm(.390) MA5K carbine.

The reason they were there was that they were going to talk to two Sangheili. One was the Arbiter Thel 'Vandum and the other was a Fleetmaster named Rutas 'Vandum. The topic was helping them with eradicating the Covenant. A Marine walks up to the already seated

UNSC officers.

"Sirs. They're awaiting your word to let...'them' in."

"Send them in Sergeant. Then take your post outside." Lord Hood says.

The Sergeant nods and heads out the door. Two shackled Sangheili walk in with four Marines each.

"Remove the cuffs." Hood orders.

"Sir, i believe that is unwise to do." Says a Corporal.

"Are you judging a direct order, Marine?" Colonel Xanders asks.

"No sir. I was just pointing out that these...individuals still pose a threat to the Admirals safty sir."

"Remove the cuffs Marine. We have plenty of security here." Xanders says.

The shifting of a shadow in the corner catches the Marines eye and he sees the outline of an armed and fully armored Spartan. His spine tingles and he quickly undoes the cuffs and leaves with his fellow Marine MP's.

"Take a seat, gentlemen. And yes, they are reinforced to accomidate your weight and stature." Lord Hood says.

The two sit down and compose themselves.

"We understand that you wish to jon with us to fight the Covenant. Is this correct?" Hood asks.

Then the Arbiter, clad in a bronze-silver armor then starts speaking in perfect english.

"Yes it is. Our reason is that we discovered that the heritic Prophets were lying to us about a great many things. They told us that Humans were a disgrace to what the Covenant stood for, and must be erradicated. I found this out durring a visit to an Oracle, which called it's self Medicant Bias. He said the symbol for Reclamation acctually ment Reclaimer. To understand what i am saying, you must know why the Covenant exist." The Arbiter says.

"And why does it?" Hood asks.

"The Covenant worship the Forerunners. An ancient civilization that embarked on a journey that made them gods, or so we were told. The Oracle Bias told us that was false. A group of known as the Celestials found and attacked the Forerunners. They both became extinct durring a prolonged war. Knowledge of the once vastly known world was lost and a large galaxy split into two. The two galazies developed and became full of life-forms that were once part of the Celestial and Forerunner races. Our religion's, no, our former religions main goal was to establish a new and vast Forerunner empire while taking the Celestials territory for ours." The Fleetmaster says.

"Then i was told by the Oracle that the ones we were distroying were the direct descendents of a Forerunners and therefore the inheritors of the technology of the Forerunner empire and it's claimed land. It also said that they were the only race that could bring peace and justice to the galaxy and do what the Forerunners of old could not. The humans of the Sol system are the direct descendents of the Forerunner race. And therefore Forerunner. I made a blood-oath, the most highly held oath of the Sangheili, to uphold and help the Forerunner Humans. I therefore repent for my sins and pray to be forgiven. I tried to rally more, but i was captured before we could and was deemed a Heritic and the Sangheili replaced by the barbaric jiralhanae. And here we are." The Arbiter says.

"May i ask where this...Oracle Medicant Bias is?" Lord Hood asks.

"The Oracle is being kept inside of the Heritic Prophet made city of High Charity. He is closely monitored by the three Hierarchs, Truth, Regret, and Mercy." The Fleetmaster says.

"They don't want it to be able to get out of ther grasp and spread the real truth about the humans. They also do it to contort and twist it's words to suit thier own agenda of galaxy-wide domination." The Arbiter says.

"Eh. What's your opinon, Admiral Cole?" Hood says.

The Sangheili stare at the human Fleetmaster with thier 'mouths' slightly opened. They had thught the man had been killed years ago.

"By the Gods...we are fortunate to have this much experience in warfare on our side." Says Fleetmaster 'Vadum.

"Well, i see that we have to find the trail of Covenant ships, get intel from thier nav logs, and follow it. Colonel Xanders, did you find any navigational data on that prison ship?" Cole asks.

"Yes sir. It seems to lead us to the same general area in the Andromeda galaxy." Rex says.

"Alright then. Colonel, make sure the Arbiter and his troops are given proper weapons and thier equipment back. Cole, you better get to the Hornet and get yourself situted. I'm going to have to make a fleet-wide speech to inform the troops of where we are going. I want all ships at battle condition orange when we depart. Meeting adjourned." Hood says.

PIRATE SHIP

SOMEWHERE NEAR FLORUM

JUNE 4 ABG

Ahsoka watched helplessly as the old jedi ship was stripped of armor, weapons, and then distroyed by turbolaser fire from a duo of CIS ships within the six-ship 'fleet'. She knew then that the Jed Council would believe that she and the others were killed durring an attack by the CIS.

She was then escorted by these apparent pirates to what looks like a cell block. After she was placed into a cell, the binders were taken off by a wookiee-like guard and the door materialized. It was a ray shield of sort. And she was trapped inside and nothing could get in or out. She knew this is due to Petro throwing himself at the shield full-force.

She then looked around her cell. It had a bed in one corner, a couch in the one opposite of the bed, a desk with chair, and, to her shock, a bag filled with her belongings, apart from her now confiscated sabers and blaster. All of Rex's belongings hadn't been vaporized as she had feared when the ship went up. It was either the daughters doing, or one of the pirates had a conscious and felt guilty and grabbed all of her things, and possibly the other younglings belongings.

She had no idea what would happen to her or the others in the future. If Rex had been there, she would know her situation would be a whole lot better. The guards would have been pre-occupied with him enough for her and the others to get free and able to help take over the ship. The other cells in their block were occupied by a species with mandibles, backwards knees, and were about eight to seven feet tall. Some others were the same ones as the small creatures Huyang had been beating the bantha out of earlier.

The more she thought about it, she came to realize that the other two unknown species in the cells must have been part of the same group as the pirates at one time. She wondered why they were in the cells and being treated worse than she was. It almost seemed like the wookiee-like beings were trying not to make enemies of her and her students.

After about two days, Ahsoka had been taken to a meeting chamber of sorts. There a wookiee-like creature in dark red and gold armor sat at one side with a vacant chair on the other. It barked and roared in what seemed to be a normal, commanding tone at the guards, who then removed her cuffs and stepped outside.

"You are the first of your species we have encountered in this place. I apologise if my men were rough on you and your compatriots when we boarded your ship. Please, take a seat." The creature says in perfect basic.

Ahsoka sits down, cautious of what the being may want.

"If you have questions, by all means, ask."

"In all my years I have seen a species similar to yours. But, you have a different build." Ahsoka says.

"We are the Jiralhanae. The little ones you see running around are the Uggnoy."

"What about the ones in the cell block?" Ahsoka asks.

"They are the Sangheili. They are not to be trusted. A few months ago, they attacked their own comrades in a coup on their own government. We Jiralhanae and the Uggnoy are two species in a large group of species under one government. We are all very religious and follow the same gods."

"Why are you here?" Ahsoka asks.

"Our gods embarked on a journey shadowed by a great war. A war we wish to finish. That is why we are here. Your ship came too close to our fleet and was marked a spy ship and boarded. My underlings failed to see that it was barely armed with only two point-defence guns and that it had the markings of a non-hostile vessel. Yet they attacked you without provocation. The reason you are locked up is that this is a war ship, and we cannot have distractions while working and having the eyes of strangers looking onto classified items. You will be treated with the upmost care possible. Ask for something, and we will retrieve it for you if possible. But, you will remain unarmed for the time being." The Jiralhanae says.

"What's your rank? I know a leader when I see it, and I would like to address you by your title."

"Very well. Only if you give me yours in return. I am Fleetmaster Vorenus and Chieftan of the Jiralhanae in this fleet."

"I'm Ahsoka Tano. I have no title apart from 'Master' or 'Knight'. Both are used to identify teachers of the 'padawans', or younglings of my people and others. Mistress is also used, but not that often. It often identifies those above my current skill level."

"I thank you for your time Master Tano. If you need anything, ask one of the Unggoy in black posted inside of the cell block. Their title is Specialist." Vorenus says as the guards re-enter the room to escort her back.

The guards do not place cuffs on her and she willingly complies to be escorted back to her current living space.

NEAR THE COVENANT/CIS FLEET

NAVY PROWLER UNSC DALLAS

JUNE 2550

"What do we have, Lieutenant?" Asks a man with a Commander's uniform on the bridge of the prowler.

"We have a fair-sized Covenant fleet of seven ships with ten escorts that resemble the ones destroyed above Harvest sir. It also has a ship with very little armament with minimal point-defence guns. It may be a prison ship sir. One was found over Harvest of the same class and tonnage." A Lieutenant in a fighter pilot's armor says.

"Alright then. Chief Watson!"

"Sir?" Says a rather large Chief Petty Officer nearby.

"Send a message to the Hornet and Trojan. Enemy fleet found in AO of coordinates discovered. Seventeen ships total. Seven Charlie and ten Charlie-India-Sierra. One may be a Phoenix-Theta. End transmission, signed Commander Mancuso of Prowler UNSC Dallas." Commander Mancuso says.

HARVEST

FIRST SOL OFFENSIVE FLEET

UNSC TROJAN

JUNE 2550

"Lord Hood! The Dallas just sent us a transmission!" Shouts a comms officer.

"What is it?" Hood asks.

"They have contact with seven Covenant and ten CIS. Discription of a ship matches that of one of the prison transport we found." The comms officer reports.

"Open a comm channel. Fleetwide." Hood orders.

The comms officer gives a thumbs-up for the open comm line.

"Ladies anad Gentlemen of the UNSC and our new allies, the Sangehili, this is Lord Hood speaking. For about the past six years, we've all fought one of the longest wars in Human history. Today, we're going to storm the Covenant beachhead like those in the 20th century when they charged the beaches of Normandy in the War that created the United Nations. The fight will be different than those of the past. For we will be bringing the war to the Covenant and thier apparent ally, the Confederacy of Independedent Systems. We will be gone from Earth and our home turf. The battles will be different. But, we have a secret weapon. Niether group knows our full potential, or that we even have the guts to attack them out of our own territory. In a few months, we will recieve reinforcements from the newly formed Battlegroup Dakota, and the Supercarrier Battleship UNSC Infinity. Our fleet will tripple in size and man-power. ODPs will be installed over our forward operating base when we find and establish one. We are now in the turning point of the war. Good luck, and God help us all." Hood says, then signaling for the transmission to end.

Minutes later, the entire fleet entered slipspace, leaving Harvest and the wreckage of the former Covenant fleet behind them.

UNKOWN LOCATION

DRIFITNG 'GHOST' SHIP

JUNE 2550

[Captain? Something has happened.] A female voice says, echoing throughout the ships corridors.

21. Chapter 21

SLIPSPACE

UNSC TROJAN

JUNE 2550

Just as the Trojan entered slipspace, Rex escorted the Arbiter and

Fleetmaster Vandum to a hanger where the weapons recovered from the prison ships armory were being held. A newly promoted Captain Perez, Sergeant Major Johnson, Master Gunnery Sergeant Stacker, and Gunny Lucas Keyes accompanied him. Two Spartans guarding the hanger step aside and let the group pass.

Inside, Doctor Halsey and the chief were looking over one of each type of non-Covenant weapon to assess their strengths and weaknesses. And they were finding many of both. The Chief had just set one down on the table when Rex walked up.

"Sir!" The Chief says, snapping to attention.

"At ease, Chief. Alright, what have you two found out?" Rex asks Halsey.

"Most of these weapons overheat, seem cheaply produced, and fire very rapidly. The bolts seem to have one objective: kill a target quickly with moderate internal damage, and that's with the armor we found. Without, limbs can be amputated and major damage is done. If it nicks your vital organs or even passes close to it, you're done. Even if you were inside a state of the art emergency center on Earth for billionaires when you got shot without armor, you would more than likely die or become seriously injured. But, with the armor systems the UNSC has, the bolt would just feel like a severe punch in the chest and knock the wind out of you. Their armor, on the other hand, is designed to deflect energy bolts similar to that fired by their own weapons. And that means..." Halsey says.

"Our weapons can eliminate them easily, the 10mm, 9.4 Kurtz, and .50 magnum rounds work alright if they're AP, AP-HE, or sabot. The 7.62 does damage, but not as much. The M7, on the other hand, is like using a feather to stab somebody." The Chief says.

"So anything from 7.62 and up with exception of the .50 magnum work fine then?" Rex says.

"Yes sir." The Chief says.

"Alright. Mel?" Rex asks.

[Yes Rich?] Mel asks from her holo on his tac-pad.

"Send a notice to all commands. M7 SMG's are to be replaced effective immediately by rifles or carbines. Anything above 7.62 is effective, .50 magnum works, but the rounds must be an armor-piercing, incendiary, or high-explosive variant."

[Will do. ETA of slipspace drop is two hours.] Mel says before dissipating.

Rex then turns and finds the Arbiter and Fleetmaster Vandum equipping themselves with energy swords, gauntlets, plasma rifles, pistols, and carbines. Each also had a small pouch with plasma grenades and the very nasty napalm bombs that were used by the Brutes.

In reflex, Rex catches himself rubbing the left side at his waist/hip. An ODST that had been next to him had been hit by one and he got some 'splash-back' from the device. He was fixed up, but he still had a burn scar there. He had received many over the six years

and countless battles.

He had one on his right cheek from an energy blade-wielding Zealot he engaged and eventually killed on Harvest in 46 or 47. Most of the battles seemed to blend into one some times. He had been hit in the chest, arms, and legs plenty of times. Some became scars while most healed and didn't scar.

He then snaps back to the present and walks over to the Arbiter as he grabs extra clips and ammo canisters for his weapons. He then grabs an active camo module from a stack of armor add-ons.

"You two set?" He asks.

"Yes, we are ready to fight. We must reclaim our honor back from those who have taken it." The Arbiter says.

"Good. We arrive at the target in two hours. The Dallas reported a ground installation at the site allong with the opposing fleet just a while ago. We believe it is a prison outpost and may be holding more UNSC and Sangheili there." Rex says.

"What are you doing about the prison?" Rutas asks.

"I'm going down there with my men and the Chiefs squad to get them out of ther cells and armed properly. Then we'll send in the main force of Marines after we secure an LZ. From then on we'll act as forward scouts for the main body. I hope you two like drop-pods and heights." Rex says.

"Why would that be?" Thel asks.

"You two are dropping with us. That is unless the Fleetmaster wants to help Lord Hood and Admiral Cole wth battling the enemy fleet. Anyway, one or both of you are coming along." Rex says.

"I will stay here. Ground combat is not one of my best suits." The Fleetmaster says.

"I will go with you, Specter." Thel says.

"Specter? When did i get that title?" Rex asks.

"The Covenant have a name for you and your unit. We called you Specters because you attacked without warning and dissapeared like ghosts. The skull engravings on your helmet visors also helped with this. The rumors and tales of the aftermath of your attacks made many Uggnoy fearful and jumpy when they got gaurd or patrol duties." Thel says.

"They should be. We'll be on their doorstep within the next hour. Time to prep for the briefing. Sergeant Major!" Rex yells.

"Sir?" Johnson asks as he looks over a rifle with the Chief.

"Take the Fleetmaster to the bridge. Inform Lord Hood that the Arbiter and two of his best SpecOps troops ground-side with Thunder and Bue Team. Chief, get three members of your team rounded up and head to the drop-bay. Brief is in twenty, drop is in one hour." Rex says.

UNKNOWN PLANET

OUTTER RIM

JUNE 4 ABG

Ahsoka and those aboard the ship were now on a planet inside of a base of some sort. There were purple craft, maroon craft, Weekway pirates, mercenaries, bountyhunters, battle droids, and about five other species she did not or knew little about. One was bird-like and carried some sort of energy shield, Uggnoy, some large bugs, the Jiralhanae, and some that were as big as an AT-AP patrol walker that were walking around in pairs which had huge metal shields and what looked like a modified turbolaser/mortar device on their right arm.

All were in different colors of armor. The rarest she had seen so far had been the Chieftans black and gold armor. A few other colors such as black, dark red, and silver were also in that category. The most she saw where those in blue, light red, and a type of dark orange and red.

The guards led her, her students, and the other unmentioned prisoner species into a fenced off area. Her students and herself were separated from the unknowns, un-cuffed, and let go inside what seemed like a fair-sized building with a type of close-cropped grass, well-maintained landscaping, and a small garden. The other sections were mostly muddy and had makeshift buildings in very poor conditions.

The unknowns and the prisoner Uggnoy were placed into these sections and locked in. She looked around and saw what seemed like heavy repeating turrets in multiple guard towers. Some of the bird-like creatures were patrolling the wall armed with rifles.

Then she realized something. She had learned about something similar to this. It was a concentration and prison camp. But she and her students were being treated nicely. This might be an example to show that they wanted no quarrel with the Republic and if they did, prisoners would be taken care of and not killed like the CIS did.

That made her wonder what the other species did to infuriate the others. Just about an hour after she arrived, a convoy arrived and a sixth species sitting on a repulsor-equipped chair arrived inside of her part of the prison. The other species bowed, kneeled, or started to pray. The chair drifted up to her with Chieftan Vorenius at the beings right side, just behind the creature, who looked very fragile.

"You must be the one Chieftan Vorenius told me about. I am truly sorry about your ship. Oh, I apologize. I am the Prophet Regret, one of three that govern and guide the Covenant. May I know your name?" Says Regret as he sees the questionable look on Ahsoka's face.

"I'm Knight Ahsoka Tano. I was the chaperone and teacher of these six. According to what I'm told by Chieftan Vorenius, an underling attacked my vessel without provocation and just because it was there. And, might I add, that ship held many items of historical

significance to my people. It is also several centuries, if not over a mellenia, in age. We were just returning home from an educational pilgramage when our FTL had a glitch and dropped us out of our version of FTL close to your fleet." Ahsoka explains.

"I will have to look into this. Chieftan, what became of this...underling?" Regret asks.

"The heretic was given to the heretic Jackals. Alive." Vorenius says, smirking.

"Good. But, it would have been favorable to let him hear of my deep dis-pleasure with thier actions personally and have to live with it. As i said before, i am truely sorry about your ship. As for the mean-time, you must remain here. You will be safe and treated well, that is if you don't try to help the others in this area of the base." Regret says as he leaves the section of the prison camp.

UNKNOWN PLANET

OPEN SPACE

UNSC DALLAS

JUNE 2550

"Commander Mancuso." Says Chief Watson.

"What is it Chief?" Mancuso asks.

"A stealth drone just flew above the ground installation. And we've found a few things that may change the war in our favor even more."

"Well, what are they?" Bart Mancuso asks.

The Chief slaps a manilla folder down infront of the Comander. A pile of photos spill out and the Commander looks through them. A few contain a high-elevation picture of what looked like a World War II concentration and work camp. Another was zoomed in n one zone where a Brute Chieftan, an unknown, and a Prophet were talking.

"A Prophet."

"To be exact sir, the High Prophet of Regret. The unknown seems to be a prisoner. In another pic the drone took, there are six more, in that group is a single human in thier early teens to about eight." Chief Watson says.

"Are they prisoners or Covie allies?" Mancuso asks.

"Prisoners. One's that the Covenant don't want to anger." The Chief says.

"Tommy, what's the ETA of the fleet?" Mancuso asks his XO, Liutenaunt Commander 'Tommy' Thompson.

"Within the next minute...wait...they're here!" Thompson says.

"Alright then. Full battle stations, ready the Shiva torpedoes. We're not giving them any chance to get to action stations."

"Tubes one through four armed and ready, awaiting order to fire."
Says a Lieutenant at the gunners station.

"Fire all four, reload with Hercules torpedoes and fire again." The Commander orders.

"Roger, one out, two out, three out, four out, awaiting splash..."

About a minute later, the four torpedoes hit home on the lead Covenant ship.

UNSC TROJAN

"Looks like Mancuso is engaging." Commander Lafayette says as the forward-most Covenant ship explodes.

"Let's give 'em some help then. Alert Admiral Cole, tell him to engage at will. Ready everything and fire everything at once." Lord Hood orders.

Minutes later, the entire fleet opened up, the enemy fleet only had enough time to fire one or two barrages before they were destroyed. Then the E-bay channel became active. It was the Dallas.

/UNSC Trojan, this is the UNSC Dallas, priority. There is a Cat Alpha on the surface. I repeat, there is a Cat Alpha Pharoah groundside. Confirmed as Pharoah Red. Pharoah Red. Confirm transmission received./
A voice says.

"This is Lord Hood, transmission received. Trojan out."

/Go get 'em Trojan. Dallas out./

In the ODST bay, Rex was waiting in his pod as the Trojan entered the upper atmosphere of the planet below. Then Mel popped up on his HUD in the right upper corner.

[Rich, Lord Hood has tasked you, the Arbiter, Sergeant Johnson, and the Chief to a Priority Alpha target. The Prophet of Regret has been spotted on the planet below, you're to hunt down the Prophet and eliminate him. Lethal force targets currently inside of a prison camp. Thunder and Captain Perez will complete the original mission. A group of unknowns is also locked up. Lord Hood wants them out of the area as fast as possible and their stance with the Covenant found out.]
Mel says.

"Will do Mel. Johnson, Chief, Arbiter, Carlos, Change in orders. Carlos, take Thunder on the original mission. Chief, Johnson, Arbiter, us four and the two SpecOps Sangheili are going to secure some unknowns and kill High Prophet Regret." Rex asks.

/Affirmative./ Says the Chief.

/I will fulfill my oath. Regret will not get off this planet alive!/

The Arbiter shouts.

/He'll regret even attacking the human race and Harvest. Let's go kill him and bring his head out on a silver platter!/ Johnson says as he racks the bolt on his BR55.

Then a tone sounds and the 200 strong Thunder Company, Arbiter, the 2 SpecOps Sangheili, and the four-member Blue Team all drop to the surface.

They pass the cloud banks and the ground races up to meet them. Purple, green, red, and blue bolts of energy race up from below hoping to hit at least one of the pods.

22. Chapter 22

UNKNOWN PLANET

GROUND SIDE

COVENANT/CIS PRISON

JUNE 2550/4 ABG

Ahsoka looked up as the guns from the guards and others opened up. Hundreds of red streaking objects were closing in on the base and prison. Only a few were hit and exploded. Then one headed straight for her. She scrambled backwards and ran. It hit several meters away from her and she fell down.

She turned back to look at it and saw it was a black pod. A large white skull was on the side. Hundreds more impacted nearby inside the prison. Then the doors blew off and dust was kicked up. A single figure in black armor got out and was armed with a rifle, pistol, and had a white skull emblazoned on its faceplate.

It stared right at her. Then the guards opened up on it. The being returned fire and the Unggoy and bird-like guards dropped like stones. A loud war-cry shattered the silence as the many prisoners flooded out of a newly cut gate and began fighting. They were being led by an unknown in gold, silver, and black armor. Two others in dark purple and dark red were also fighting. The imprisoned Unggoy were also in this group with a large group of the black armored beings.

Another black armored being shot the gate of the enclosure she was in and rushed up to the one and also started firing at the guards. By then, the entire prison was freed and were fighting. As the guards were distracted, the three riot leaders rushed over as did a large green armored being with the number 117 emblazoned on their chest plate.

"Colonel Xanders, all the prisoners are freed and are arming up." The gold, silver, and black armored says.

"Very well Arbiter. Chief, Johnson, go find the other six. Bring them here. Arbiter, you take your men and start your search for that damned Prophet. I want his head!" The person says in an all too familiar voice.

The Arbiter and his two troopers ran off and began shouting orders to the fellow Sangheili that had just been freed to look for Regret and the Chieftan. Then he turns back to the Togruta in front of him. She was obviously a Jedi Knight or Master.

"Wh-what, who, are you?" She asks.

Her voice ticks in his mind, but he couldn't put a finger on the name. She was panicky and frightened. He slung his rifle and knelt down near her.

"Easy, I won't hurt you. I just have a few questions." Rex explains.

"Ok?" She says unsure.

"Are you allied to the Covenant?"

"No."

"Why are you here?" Rex asks.

"My ship was attacked and I was taken prisoner."

"Last question, what is your name and title if you have one?" Rex asks.

"I'm Jedi Knight and instructor Ahsoka Tano." The Togruta says.

Rex just stared at her in shock. Ahsoka was a knight, and was right in front of him. After about five years of nothing but heartbreak and non-stop war, here was the only person he had taken an interest in. He checked his scanners and found no hostiles nearby. He then twisted and removed his helmet, he then held out his hand to Ahsoka. It was all he could do until they were aboard the Trojan and in his office.

"Colonel Richard Ed Xanders, CO of Tunder Company, United Nations Space Corps High Command Special Warfare, Intel, and Tactics group." Rex says as he helps her up.

As he was helping her up, Ahsoka saw his facial features. They included a scar on his chin, one on his right cheek, military-style hair cut, and very light brown eyes just as she was about to ask him a multitude of questions, the other black armored one called Johnson and the 'Chief' returned with all six of her students and Huyang.

"Sergeant Major, what's with the mech?" The Colonel asks.

"Found 'em with the kids sir. Almost got it's head tore off when it dropped from the rafters right in front of the Chief here." Johnson says.

"Get them to the LZ, Johnson. The Chief and I are going to go find the Arbiter." Colonel Xanders says as he puts his helmet back on.

"Wait! Is it alright if I go with you?" Ahsoka asks the now helmeted

man, wanting to see if he really was who she thought he was or not.

"...I guess it would be ok. But i don't have a weapon for you to use. You get shot, it's all on you for wanting to come along. Let's go." He says, grabbing his rifle and running off towards the gate of the prison.

As they exit the prison, the base is nothing but one huge firefight. The only cover were burnt out vehicles, destroyed buildings, crates, and other objects strewn about. They were pinned up against the prison wall.

"Thunder one-eight to Hammer one-six and Phoenix one-six, get some fire support inside this base now! We're about to be pushed back into the prison by several Wraiths and multiple Hunter's!" The Colonel shouted into what Ahsoka guessed was a com.

Seconds later, the wall beside the enemy blew in. A tank rolled in and fired a round off. The round hit and destroyed one of the large purple craft firing large mortar-like shells. Then a large shadow covered the ground. She looked up and saw a large aircraft above firing guns and rockets. Long, bronze cylinders were falling from the bottom of the craft.

She looked around and saw similar cylinders lying at the feet of those in the black armor. Then she remembered the ones in the pouches on the Colonels chest-plate. They were similar, but had a point on them. She then realized that the weapons they were using were projectile weapons. Very advanced ones.

Rex watched as the enemy was being annihilated by the Scorpion of Hammer one-six and one of several gunships under Phoenix one-six's command.

/Phoenix one-six to Thunder one-eight, i'm low on munitions. Heading back and will be on station in about twenty. Phoenix out./ The pilot says as he pulls up and out, the rear gunner firing a salvo of 40mm grenades as the craft pulled up.

"Well, glad that's over. You doin' alright kid?" He asks Ahsoka.

"Yes i am fine. And don't call me kid."

"Good. Now stay behind me, stop when i do, and you do what i tell you. It may just save you from being shot or incinerated. Chief, keep an eye on her." Rex orders the Spartan.

He nods and Rex breaks cover. Mel had located the Arbiter and they were closing in on the Prophet of Regret and the Brute Chieftan, but they were on the other side of the base. To get there, one had to run a gauntlet of snipers, possible ambushes, and traps.

The trio were going in without reinforcement and minimally armed with two pistols, two rifles, about fifteen to twenty grenades, and about eight cans of C-7 foaming explosives. Not much to use when more was needed or preferable. And in addition, one wasn't even armed with a knife or even a throwing rock.

They took cover behind a destroyed Wraith. The Scorpion had moved so that it could provide covering fire to the Sangheili and UNSC Marines that were arriving in Warthogs and a few M313 Elephant APCs from a secured LZ a fair distance away from the base. That had been established by ODS'Ts from the Forward Unto Dawn, one of several mass troop transport frigates assigned to the fleet.

Several more frigates were designated as fleet support and supply vessels. The Dawn and another craft were at the LZ deploying forces, establishing a forward CP as Pelicans and other UNSC heavy transports were landing from the fleet to deploy more Marines and equipment groundside.

As they moved between spots big enough for them to take cover, a sniper opened up on them.

After about the third shot from the sniper, Rex had a pretty good idea where it was. He laid flat on the ground, placing his rifle around the corner. He increased the magnification of his rifle's scope on his HUD. He moved his rifle and found his target waiting for him to poke his head around the corner, but he would do no such thing.

Instead, he flipped his rifle's selector to burst, and gently squeezed the trigger. The target's head and torso exploded as the three high-explosive 10mm sabot rounds hit it. He then leaned around the corner, aiming down his MA5D's smart-link tri-power scope(1x, 4x, 8x), scanning for more.

"All clear! Sniper's down!" He shouts, gesturing for them to move up.

"Mel, inform Eagle to get to a high-point and set up overwatch on us until we reach the Arbiter's location." Rex says to Mel over their private and heavily encrypted com channel.

[Will do. Be advised, the Arbiter said the Prophet left the AO and is now somewhere underground. He also says he believes there is a Forerunner installation below us. A lift is located inside building twenty, a motor pool.] Mel says.

"Roger." Rex says.

The group of three move forward, cautious of ambushes. A few times, Eagle told them to stop and fired a few rounds. Afterwards, some screams of pain were heard or minute explosions and/or gunfire from UNSC, Covenant, and Sangheili forces.

They would then receive an all-clear and move on. As they moved, they often came across the leftovers from a skirmish. At one point there was the completely halved, maimed, and mangled bodies of several Brutes, Weequay mercs, Unggoy, and a few other species.

He then heard Ahsoka gasp in horror. He guessed she hadn't seen anything like the scene before her prior to that time. It had been the same for him when the war started, but he moved on, and eventually, it became a common sight for himself and his now veteran ODS'T's.

Then he saw their target, building twenty, and a whole lot of dug in

enemy troops around the main doors to the pool with what appeared to be a Spectre with a Trandosian merc manning the gun behind them. That was not good. There also was two Brute Prowler troop transporters whose guns were also manned.

"Shit. Chief, come and look at this."

The Chief cwalked over and took a knee beside the Colonel behind a large pile of debris. Curious, Ahsoka went over and saw three armored craft and dug-in infantry infront of a building.

"What's the plan now?" Ahsoka asks.

"We take them out." The Chief says.

"But we don't have a rocket!" She says.

"Watch and learn." Xanders says as he pulls out four cans of C-7 and about eight grenades.

He then takes of an armored pack he had on and took out a roll of black tape. He then taped the spoons on and removed the pins, arming the devices. He then taped the armed grenades to each can and placed a timed det onto the top of each can.

"Then you set the timer for ten seconds and you have a make-shift anti-armor and personell device. You ready Chief?" The inginuitive officer asks.

He nods and Xanders tosses him the first device with the timer started. The Chief then throws it as hard as he can and it lands near the Prowlers unnoticed, the next two also go unnoticed as one lands next to the other prowler aad the other infront of the make-shift wall made up of objects from the motor pool.

Then the last one hits the Trannie merc manning the gun of the craft inside the pool in the face. A shout is heard as a Weekway noticed the device and the downed Trandosian. Then they went off. As they did, she was grabed ahold of and something laid on top of her.

23. Chapter 23

UNKNOWN PLANETARY SYSTEM

GROUND SIDE

NEAR BUILDING 20

JUNE 2550

As the explosions slowed and eventually stopped, whatever was on top of Ahsoka moved off. When she got up, she noticed it had been the Colonel. All around, debris from the craft laid burning, burnt, or were still smoking from the tremendous ammount of heat. As she looked closer, she found a large chunk of debris had hit right where she had been. If Colonel Xanders hadn't tackled and covered her with his own body, she would be dead.

It also led to the nagging feeling that she knew the man from

somewhere. But the problem was that she had no idea where or why she would know him. She thought he looked like a clone trooper, but he was frakking six foot nine. A regular trooper was usually at five foot seven to six foot. The only one she knew was over six foot had been Rex.

They crossed a 'street' and entered the motor pool. As they neared an office, they stopped.

"Here, take this and use it when it is absolutely nessecary." Said the Colonel as he handed her a combat blade inside a sheath from his chest-plate.

A second, but shorter one, was on the left side of his belt. That helped make her feel like she wasn't dis-arming him of a weapon. The hilt had a blue tint to it. She drew the blade and found the gostly immage of a blue lightning bolt on both sides.

The blade was well balanced and looked like it was made for throwing or heavy combat. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly after she noticed small pits and dents with multi-colored splotches in them. She then sheathed the knife and placed it where her primary saber used to be. Ahsoka felt out of her element without her sabers and hoped that they would be found and returned to her.

Rex and the Chief approached the office door. They would do things the old-fashioned way and kick in the door. The Chief placed his back and right boot in the door and kicked. Rex rushed in with his rifle raised and the Chief followed. The office contained the dead bodies of two Brute honor gaurds, numerous Uggnoy, and a few Weekways and mercs.

"Clear." Rex says after checking behind a desk.

"Mel, where's this lift?" Rex asks through a private com line directly to his AI.

[The lift is inside of the closet directly behind the Chief.] Mel says.

"This is a dead end, what are we doing here?" Ahsoka asks as she walks in.

"Not a dead end. The closet behind the Chief contains a lift. Open it, i got you covered." Rex says, aiming his rifle at the closet.

The Chief hit a switch on a control pad and the door opened. The inside held armor, cloth uniforms, and some other pieces of gear.

"Where's the lift?" Ahsoka asks.

"We'll find out in abut fifteen seconds. You two get clear." Rex says, taking out a grenade.

Ahsoka and the Chief leave the office. He primes the grenade rolls it into the bottom of the closet, and dives beind the desk for cover. It goes off and he gets up with his rifle ready.

Ahsoka and the Chief re-enter. The entire cabinet had been blown apart to reveal a standard cargo lift large enough for at least four Jiralhanae.

"Down we go. Miss Tano, you stay behind me and the Chief." Rex says.

"Why?" Ahsoka asks.

"You don't have armor, we don't know what's down there, and you are not armed with any long to mid-range weapon. Chances are that there are honor guards and other hostiles the Arbiter and his men missed." Rex says as they get onto the lift and head down.

As the lift descended, Ahsoka found herself clutching the small pouch where she kept Rex's letter folded up inside of. She wanted to ask this Colonel so many questions, but they were in the midst of a battle. One that seemed very important to this 'United Nations Space Command' and the Sangheili.

As the lift reached the bottom and the doors opened, it was another gory sight. More dead Covenant, mercs, pirates, droids, and Ungnoy were all around. Some unknown droids were also there, blasted to fragments and burnt out hulks lying around.

"What are these things?" Ahsoka asks as she inspects one.

[I can answer that.] Says a digital voice behind the Chief and Rex.

Before 859 Static Carillion could process a nano-byte of digital information, he found his photo-receptor looking down the barrels of both of the Reclaimers weapons. A quick scan showed that they were almost primitive, but very effective.

[Oh my. My apologies. I am 859 Static Carillion, the monitor of this Forerunner Installation.] He says.

The two Reclaimers lower their weapons slightly and appear to talk to each other through some sort of communication device.

"Alright...what the hell is this place?" Asks the Reclaimer in black armor with some sort of artwork on its helmet's visor.

[This is Installation zero-three, one of many spread throughout the galaxy. This installation's main purpose is to create arms and armor for the former Forerunner military.] Says 859.

"Oh bantha..." Says the Togrutan female.

"This is very important Carillion, there is a person in this Installation who wants to use it to eliminate the Human race and anything or body they receive resistance from, we need to find this individual fast. He is hard not to miss, he is on a floating chair surrounded by heavily armed guards. Three Sangheili are also trying to find him. I must know now if you have seen him, where, and how long ago." The black armored one says.

[I have seen him, Reclaimer. If he is an enemy of yours, he is an

enemy of mine. The Sangheili are on his trail, but are behind him by a fair distance.] 859 says.

"What's the fastest route there?" The green armored one asks.

[The quickest route is by slipspace translocation, but, we must head to the nearest depot. That is several hundred yards away and through several different passages. I'll show you the way.] 859 replies.

"Then let's move. If that Prophet gets away, we may never find him again and he'll alert the Covenant of our presence." The black armored one says.

The Arbiter and two of his SpecOps troopers were moving down a corridor towards the Heretic Prophet Regret, Deputy Chieftan of the Jiralhanae Vorenius, and numerous honor guards. He hoped that the Demon and Specter were behind them and closing in. Then, just as they entered a junction, several large, metal, and heavy objects fell on top of him. These moved and got off of him.

"Damnit 859, you could have warned us about that!" A female voice shouts.

[Now how was I supposed to predict that the coordinates would place you on the ceiling and not the floor! The system has sat dormant several millennia and has developed bugs in the system, ones that have evaded my annual screening.] Shouts a digitized male.

The Arbiter got up and saw it had been the Demon, Specter, a female of an unknown species, and an Oracle floating nearby.

"Which is when?" Asks the Demon.

[In three standard Erde-Tyrene decades from now. The scan can only be done once every century due to limitations on this installation's equipment's energy consumption.] Says the Oracle.

"Where did you find this Oracle, Specter?" The Arbiter asks, awe-struck.

"He found us Arbiter. The importance of this entire op just elevated, tell him what you told me Carllion." Says the Specter.

[This Installation produces military arms and armor for the former Forerunner military. According to what I am told, this 'Prophet' wants the technology for himself and his army. To slow them down, I've dispatched Sentinels to intercept and engage the Prophet and his troops.] The Oracle, whose name was apparently Carllion, says.

"Lead the way, and we will follow." The Arbiter says to the Oracle.

After several fire-fights and small skirmishes, the group of five were close to the Prophet of Regret. The Sentinels had divided and half were heading off the Prophet with 859 Static Carllion. The other half of the Sentinel forces were supporting Rex, the Chief, Arbiter, Ahsoka, and the two Sangheili SpecOps members.

Just as they reach a large junction, talking was heard by Rex. One

was a deep rumbling voice, one was Carillion, and the third must have been the Prophet of Regrets. He signaled to the Arbiter, Chief, and the SpecOps to ready their weapons. Regret was arguing with Carillion about letting him pass.

"Why won't you let me pass?" Regret asks.

[Your actions are violating protocol. I must insist that you have your guards drop their weapons and stay absolutely still for bio-scans.]

"The enemy is approaching, we don't have time! They will destroy this place and all that it contains!" Regret shouts.

[I must consult the Reclaimers first before I allow you to breach standard and high security procedures.] 859 says, noticing the group of Sentinels approaching silently from behind the Prophet.

The sound of MA5 safeties being switched off, the silent whine of plasma rifles and carbines, and the activation of the Arbiters energy blade catch the attention of Regret who spins around to see the other group already in position and targeting the Covenant in the octagonal junction. All of the doors slide shut and lock creating an enclosed fighting space.

[Should I let them pass Reclaimer?] 859 asks Rex directly after floating over next to him.

Vorenius roars and the Covenant-allied guards open up. Rex and the others do the same, Sentinels form makeshift shields in front of them and start firing with moderate-yield energy weapons.

Rex's 'shield' was destroyed when Vorenius hit the front with his gravity hammer and made the Sentinels either short-circuit and fall or explode into hundreds of fragments. Carillion had moved away and was firing his own weapon at some Covenant troops. Rex was not so fortunate. The shockwave of the hammer threw him back several yards into a wall.

Just as he regained consciousness, Ahsoka was looking him over, and behind her he saw Vorenius charging straight at them. He grabbed her and threw her aside to safety. He then opened fire with his MA5D and dove out of the way while firing. The hammer hit and dented the wall slightly.

Rex's rifle ran dry and he was forced to abandon it due to the massive Brute turning towards him and charging full force, his hammer discarded due to it being either too cumbersome or damaged. He acted quickly and moved, making Vorenius end up hitting his head on the wall behind Rex.

Rex then pulled his knife, slammed into Vorenius' back full force, making him hit the wall a second time. He then plunged his knife into a small opening in Vorenius' helmet and quickly jerking up. The chieftan's helmet flew off as he was able to grab Rex's leg and throw him off with the knife still imbedded into its back.

Rex's helmet flew off and bounced. It landed next to a stunned Ahsoka. Rex then drew his pistol and fired twelve armor-piercing high-explosive rounds into Vorenius' chest and face. The Jiralhanae

Deputy Chieftan stumbled and then collapsed as the last round went through his left eye and exploded inside of his skull.

While this was happening, the two SpecOps Sangheili had been killed, the Prophets hover-chair disabled, and over half of the Sentinels destroyed. Only honor guard Jiralhanae remained and were fighting and shielding Regret from the Chief, Arbiter, Carillion, and four Sentinels. Rex reloaded his M6C and took position in a small alcove. He would have to find his helmet and MA5D later. Ahsoka had taken cover near a door and was being fired at by an honor guardsman. One armed with a high-power E-5.

That could go through most objects easily. Rex quickly fired three times at the Brute, gaining its full attention. The Honor Guard Brutes had armored plates on their chest, upper arms, and back. That distinguished them from the un-armored infantry-grade units that made up the bulk of the Brute forces. The armor lessened the damage done by almost all low and moderate caliber rounds.

It swivled and opened fire with its rifle at him. Rounds whizzed past his alcove and he felt the impact through the vibration of the wall from the impact of the rounds. Then the Brute's rifle sputtered and died in its hands. Rex took the opening, leaned out, and fired. Two rounds hit the surprised Brute in the throat. It dropped with its hands around its bleeding throat, choking on its own blood.

Then a door behind the Arbiter blew in and ODSTs from Thunder swarmed in, firing. They had received a signal that Mel had sent out for reinforcements. Master Gunny Stacker had led the squad of four down. With the additional help, the Honor Guards fell quickly. The Prophet and the last honor guard had taken cover in another alcove to Rex's right, diagonal from the Chief, 859, and the Arbiter, directly in front of Stacker and the four Thunder ODSTs, and Ahsoka was still in an alcove across from Rex's.

Rex said he didn't have a good angle, so he left his alcove and was moving to one closer to Regrets position, slow and quietly when the Arbiter started shouting.

"Come on out you cowardly heretics and face us like real Covenant!" The Arbiter yells.

Then, the worse happened. The honor guard stomped out of its alcove with a high-power carbine screaming at the same time. And it seemed to have picked Rex to be its prime target. It fired its carbine as it charged. Rex fired the remaining seven rounds in his M6C at it. Eight of fifteen rounds from the Brute's rifle hit Rex right in the chest, twice in the left arm, and one grazed the side of his head. He lost consciousness soon after.

When Ahsoka saw the Colonel get hit hard by the Jiralhanae, something snapped inside of her. She drew the combat knife and she looked at the blade. And then she saw it, a faint engraving of jaig eyes behind the blue lightning bolt.

"Rex..." She silently whispered to herself and she felt that the man was Rex through the Force.

Then time slowed to a crawl. She carefully placed her hand on the blade, placed the unsharpened edge against the length of her pointer,

'aimed', and threw as hard as she could. Just like Rex had taught her. The blade crossed the space within half a second or less, and it hit right on target.

Time returned to normal and the Jiralhanae fell with a knife embedded into the back of it's neck. Then everyone opened fire on the corridor. She turned and watched as the body of the Prophet dropped to the floor. She then rushed over to the fallen Colonel. An ODST with a bright red cross with a white background on their armor slid up beside her.

24. Chapter 24

STAR SYSTEM CODENAME: BEACHHEAD NEPTUNE

PLANET CODENAME: NORMANDY

UNSC TROJAN

ONE DAY AFTER REGRET'S DEMISE

JUNE 2550/4 ABG

Petty Officer First Class James 'Doc' O'Brian, a former Irish pastor and doctor from Harvest, had done his best to help save the life of the man Thunder Company considered a father. After they had gotten the Colonel out of the sub-terrainian structure and into a Pelican, he was flown to the Trojan and was handed off to Doctor Halsey who had him transported to a secured section of the ship instead of the medbay.

The last he heard, the Colonel had been taken to his quarters and was resting. This was after several hours after medical procedures and precautions.

He had been informed by a Chief Petty Officer who had the markings of HIGHCOM's science and medical group that the round that had nicked him in the side of his head was minor and he was temporarily knocked out from the impact. His left arm had been hit twice and the impact had sprained his shoulder and dis-located his elbow. Only one round was able to penetrate his armor and had caused several ribs to bruise and a second degree burn to form due to it's slowed momentum and the heat of the round. In all, the Colonels injuries sounded worse than they really were.

He was heading to the drop bay to inform the others that the Colonel was doing fine and was out of action for the next few days. Supposedly, the Colonel would be back in action within one or two days. The Covenant base had been fixed and enlarged so that the fleet would have a staging ground for operations.

Not a single Covenant trooper surrendered. Most were killed fighting, committed suicide, or were hunted down by these floating mechs that were apparently called Sentinels by the Arbiter. One was supposedly a unique one called a 'Monitor'. And within the rumor mill, it was said that it was on the bridge with Lord Hood talking about new weapons, armor, and other possible military equipment improvements and refits.

Ahsoka was nervous and estatic all at the same time. She was currently looking over Rex in his quarters aboard one of two flagships of a fleet she had seen when she arrived. She wanted to give him a hug and a kiss when he woke up, but that might freak him out a bit. For all she new, he might not recognize her. He had been gone almost two, going on three years.

She had looked around his cabin and saw many things he had displayed. Most of which were holo-stills and flimsi-stills around a desk and near his larger than usual bed. Most were of him and others in armor or in some sort of uniform. In one, he was smoking what looked like a cig with four others on a rooftop somewhere.

Their armor was caked in durt, mud, and dried fluids of different colors. Some had scortch marks, dents, nicks, scratches, and other features that showed heavy combat. Another displayed piece was a large wood-trimmed box. It had ribbons, medals, and other odds and ends inside of it.

On his desk sat what appeared to be a datapad of some sort. It appeared to be able to be strapped to ones left arm. But that wasn't the reason she was looking around over there. What she was really interested in was a blue-tinted light glowing on a circle next to the datapad.

As she was looking at it, it sprung to life. A holo of a human female appeared dressed in a black shirt with the letters UNSC stenciled across the chest, grey pants, and combat boots.

"Oh my."

[You must be Miss Tano. I'm Melissa, the Colonels personal AI. How's he doing?]

"He's resting. Wait, how did you know my name?" Ahsoka asks.

[I was there when introductions were conducted after his drop pod almost killed you. Right in that tac-pad by your arm. I'm always with him, helping him find certain locations, call certain people, do paper work he doesn't have time to do, call in support durring combat, find locations of the enemy, hack into most servers if theres an acess point available, and pilot most craft in the UNSC arsenal, that includes the ship we're on.]

"Wow, now that's a lot of talent."

[Well, it's not talent. It's all programing.]

"Not how i see it. I see everything, artificial intelegence or self-aware being, as a unique living thing with their own talents."

[That's how the Colonel sees things. I can see how you two were able to bond. I do believe he is waking up.] Mel says, leaning to the left to look around Ahsoka.

The first thing Rex saw was the ceiling of the room he was in. Then he felt the blankets, saw a faint blue-white glow to his left, then he felt a cool, soft hand toutch his gently. He looked over and saw Ahsoka standing there.

"You feeling alright?" She asks.

"Yeah. Where the hell am i?" Rex asks.

[Back in your quarters. Lord Hood and Doctor Halsey have given me orders to keep you in her for the next day. Carl knows and so do the others.]

"...Well, looks like you got me there Mel. If Franks goes at it agan, sick Johnson on him for me." Rex orders.

[Will do sir.] Mel says as she dissapears from the desk.

"So, how's the war been going on your end Ahsoka?" Rex asks.

"Worse and worse everyday. I was knighted and given the task to teach younglings. My ship was attacked by those Jiralhanae and i ended up in that prison for ony about twelve hours to about a day before you and your friends showed up. What about you?" Ahsoka asks.

"Six years of genocidal non-humanoids trying to destroy humanity. Started in 2545 and is still running. Current UNSC year is 2550."

"Six years? It's only been two, amost three since you went MIA." Ahsoka says.

Rex sits there with a confused look which is mirrored by Ahsoka until something clicks.

"How long is a standard Republic year in days?" Rex asks.

"Six hundred fifty days. Why?"

"Standard UNSC year is three hundred sixty-five days. Do the math and..." Rex starts.

"And theres eight hundred ninty days difference. So, how old does that make you then?" Ahsoka asks.

"In UNSC years since i arrived there, i'm twenty-three. But, you're eighteen according to the Republic."

"But, what about the GAR? What would happen if they found that you were a clone?" Asoka asks, concerned.

"They can't do anything. An ID chip in my arm was removed by Doctor Halsey when i suddenly showed up on the UNSCs doorstep. All information of me being a clone are gone. I have a new name, legalized birth certificates, legal documents listing me as a natural born UNSC citizen, the whole nine yards. My genetics were pure coincidence that they almost match up with a Fett clone's DNA. I do have some differences that place me outside the realm of being a clone, even though i am, or was. Depending on your view." Rex says, moving so he sat upright.

Ahsoka smiled and gave him a hug which he returned.

"Now, what were you going to tell me before i was blown up by that

teleporter?" Rex asks.

"Nothing you've already said in this letter." Ahsoka says pulling out the folded letter Jesse had given her.

"So, Jesse did get it to you. And what do you mean?" Rex asks, mildly confused.

"Just this." Ahsoka says giving him a surprise kiss on the lips.

Rex was shocked a first, but he melted into her kiss and returned it. Ahsoka pulled back, her lekku turning a darker shade of blue. A Togrutan blush.

"Well, i wasn't expecting that. And yes, now i know what you meant." Rex says.

Ahsoka yawned and looked around the room. It had been a long day and a half with no to little sleep. She was more than likely searching for a place to lay down and sleep. Rex moved over and flipped the covers back. Ahsoka took off her boots and placed them next to the bed.

She then climbed in and curled up next to Rex, his massive right arm pulled her close. Rex pulled the blanket up and the lights flicked off. The only light in the room was a soft blue-white glow coming from the desk.

['Theose two are ment for each other. I'm going to do my best to make sure it stays that way.'] Mel thinks to herself as she shuts down until 'morning'.

Several hours later, Ahsoka wakes up and finds Rex gone. The bed was still warm from his body heat. Then she heard the shower running inside of the bathroom. The thought of a nice hot shower and hot food made her snap wide awake in seconds.

Then the sound of running water stopped and the door to the bathroom opened and a bare-chested Rex walked out. She saw he had a fair sized burn on the left side of his waist and multiple scars. Most were small to moderately sized. It did scare her a bit that he had gotten wounded so much, but it also proved he was a survivor. One that didn't give up.

But, she also saw his upper body was nothing but pure muscle. She couldn't help but sigh. Rex turned around and saw her there lying awake.

"Looks like somebody finnaly decided to wake up." Rex says as he slid a black PT shirt on.

"Yeah. Is it alright if i take a shower?" Ahsoka asks.

"Go ahead. Your bag's on the desk." Rex says as he pulls out a belt with a hoilster out of a locker.

Ahsoka got up and found her bag right on top of the desk with her sabers and Rex's mini DC-17. She set her sabers aside and picked up the deece.

"I think i sould give this back to you." Ahsoka says offering it to Rex.

"Nah. Keep it. I don't use deeces anymore, only M6 pistols nowadays." Rex says as he pulls out his M6C, puts a clip into it, and pulls the slide back, putting a round into the chamber. He then grabbed several clips and placed them into two seperate poutches.

"Why's that?"

"I've used an M6 for six years straight. And now that i'm here, i have to tread lightly. It'll be different from now on. I won't be able to have GAR equipment due to that it would raise suspicions that i ether killed or am a clone." Rex says.

"...True. I hadn't thought of that." Ahsoka says.

"If we do end up on Courasaunt, i won't be able to go near the Temple, Barracks, Senate, naval yard, or any other government installation unless i am assigned to Lord Hood or Admiral Coles protection and escort detail." Rex says.

"I figured as much. I just wish we could be together without the GAR or the Order in ether of our lives." Ahsoka says, pulling out some clean clothing.

"We could, but you'd have to leave the order, cut most ties to the Republic, stay on UNSC ships, and live in a society that is one hundred percent human. Is that something you think you could do?" Rex asks.

Before Ahsoka could answer, Mel appeared on the desk.

[Rich, we have a situation.]

"Yeah?"

[A craft about several hundred meters long just entered a nearby system where the Dallas was scouting. A smaller ship jumped in as well, lingered for about sixty to nintey seconds, then abruptly dissapeared from the scanners. The larger ship is sending out an SOS on an open channel. Lord Hood want's the occupants rescued or recovered if possible. Intel gathered shows evidence of decompression and the possibility that it has been boarded. Hood wants you to grab three others for the op. There's a briefing on the bridge in fifteen.] Mel says.

"Alright. Inform Johnson, the Chief, and the Arbiter to armor up and met me in the hanger. Get as much intel as possible and alert the Dallas that we will be infiltrating the unknown via Pelican." Rex says.

[Will do.] Mel says as she dissapears.

As Mel dissapears, Ahsoka saw that Rex was on edge as he was putting on his armor. She knew the craft had a good possibility of being another CIS or a GAR craft. And that could be good, or in Rex's case, the worst possible scenario. Any slip-up, he could wind up in a bad way. And so could his squad-mates.

"Rex? You alright?" Ahsoka asks, concerned as she places a hand on his arm.

"Not really. All it takes is one trooper that would recognize me."

"Rex, the chances are one in a million that it's the 501st or somebody that knows or knew you." Ahsoka says.

"Not really. My old serial number had zero-one in front of it. Do you know what that means?" Rex asks.

"...Not really."

"It means first batch, specimen number seven-five-six-seven. I am one of the few survivors of the first batch. And I was a drill instructor until the five-oh-one was formed and I was assigned as its Captain. I was and still am one of the oldest clone troopers still alive. I know that I'll outlive all of my brothers by decades." Rex says, closing his locker and staring down at his helmet's visor.

"You may be older, many troopers may know Captain oh-one slash seven-five-six-seven, but, they don't know anything about Colonel Richard Xanders. All that matters is that you and I know who you really are." Ahsoka says, giving him a hug.

25. Chapter 25

NEAR UNKNOWN CRAFT

UNSC TROJAN

In a secure room near the bridge, Lord Hood was giving a short briefing to Rich Xanders, Sergeant Major Avery Jonson, the Master Chief, the Arbiter, and a 'Jedi Knight' named Ahsoka Tano, who apparently had a past history with Rich before he ended up with the UNSC. That intel given to him by Rich also gave him the stance of a neutral and unexpected visitor to the CIS and the Galactic Republic's civil war over their own turf and rights.

It reminded him of the great American Civil War in the nineteenth century, which he learned of when he was a cadet in OCS about how modern military maneuvers were developed along with some technologies that had been developed during the war that are still being used.

The briefing had been short and to the point. The Dallas and Trojan would remain in the shadows until the occupants of the unknown ship were rescued, an unknown, or hostiles appeared in the area. The Dallas had reported a contact on the very maximum distance their scanners would allow and that it was approaching at a fairly fast speed.

The Pelican was prepped and the team of five ready. Miss Tano would accompany the group to ensure the unofficial stance of the UNSC personnel, Rich, Johnson, and the Chief, and the Arbiter with the GAR and CIS. He felt like the UNSC would have to fortify their stance and expand onto unoccupied planets with colonies and military

installations.

In the hanger, the all-black Pelican was ready and the pilots were conducting their last-minute pre-flight system checks. In the enlarged rear cargo section, Johnson, the Chief, the Arbiter, Rex, and Ahsoka were all getting ready for a zero-g and vacuum insert onto an unknown vessel. The extended cargo section was equipped with a Universal Magnetic Extending Ballistic/Blast-Resistant Airlock, or UMEB/B-RA(unn-emmm-bbrrrr-err-aa) unit.

For this op, their rifles would have been too bulky, so Rich, the Chief, and Johnson had to grab MA5K carbines with forward grips, smart-link sights, silencers, and infrared flashlights that could only be seen on VISR-equipped helmets. The Arbiter elected to carry his plasma rifle and a plasma pistol. Ahsoka kept her sabers and mini DC-17.

Due to Ahsoka's unique needs, the armorer on the Trojan had to make a custom re-breather pack for Ahsoka. She breathed oxygen like a human, but her monotrails and lekku obstructed the helmets and face-masks. She was given a custom face-mask with padded straps and a modified air-tight seal. Other than that, she was good to go.

"You four heard Lord Hood at the briefing. Unknown ship with possibly armed and pissed-off occupants is the target. An unknown ship is being monitored by the Dallas at maximum range with scanners only. All that I know is it is closing fast and is fairly large. The Trojan and Dallas will stay in stealth-mode unless hostiles or more unknowns appear. The fleet will not arrive unless called for to deal with a large threat. If something goes down, we'll be alone with the problem-causer until rescue, reinforcements, or a recovery team arrives. Miss Tano will keep us from being killed by her people, if it is this CIS we've been fighting with the Covenant, shoot 'em on sight. No mercy. That clear?"

"Yes sir." Johnson replies.

The Chief nods and the Arbiter thumps his chest with his right fist and bows his head.

"Good. Enjoy your seven-mike flight to your potential deaths." Rex says, half joking, acting as a space-line attendant.

DISABLED GIZER L-6 FREIGHTER

AIR-TIGHT BRIDGE

JUNE 4 ABG

Sergeant RC-1309 'Niner', RC-1136 'Darman', RC-8015 'Fi', and RC-3222 'Atin', aka Omega Squad of Battalion Zero-Five of the First Special Operations Brigade, Grand Army of the Republic were in quite the predicament. They had boarded the freighter they were currently on due to suspicions that it was a Seppie vessel that was inside a convoy of legit vessels.

That turned out to be quite the fact. Two prisoners had been sucked out of an airlock when their Traffic Interdiction Vessel, or TIV, disappeared from the side of the suspect vessel. The TIV only left part of its docking ring and a two-meter hole in the side of the

ship.

The bridge was still pressurized and there were also three additional prisoners tied up with plasti-cuffs and tape to hold them onto the deck. They had called in a Red Zero, the highest level of mayday in the GAR. The nearest vessel was ten minutes away, or so they thought.

The closest would be Delta Squad in their 'borrowed' ride. Fi and Darman had secured and were guarding the trio of prisoners, Niner was on the direct com line to Arca Barracks where the Brigade HQ was located, and Atin was rifling through consoles on the bridge for intel that he would download onto data-chips.

Fi was bored out of his mind just staring at the human and two nitko prisoners. He had began walkng around and was near the viewport when he saw a black silhouette approach the bridge's viewport.

"Sarge, what's Delta's and the QRF's ETA?" He asks.

"Fifteen for Delta and twenty for the QRF. Why?" Niner asks.

"Better add a third. Unknown at my twelve o'clock, half a mike and closing." Fi says, racking the bolt on his DC-17 rifle.

"What!?" Niner shouts, rushing over with Darman and Atin.

Then the craft closed in and stopped. A tube extended right to the viewport several meters away and connected.

"Defencive positions! Let's move!" Niner ordered.

The commandos took thier positions behind consoles. Darman and Fi had to leave the prisoners where they were. The human was freaking out that he may be sucked out of the ship via explosive decompression. The two nitko were trying to free thier bonds and fight back.

The plasti-glass shatered and a multiple cylinders were tossed into the bridge. A bright flash made thier visors over-load and multiple loud bangs nearly defened the four commandos. Fi felt something knock his rifle away and pin him to the ground and place something on his chest.

His visor cleared up and found a large, armored xeno pinning him and Niner to the ground, Darman was being subdued by a black-armored humanoid, and Atin was being restrained by a green armored being, another black armored being with a skull engraved on thier helmet was keeping thier eye on the prisoners.

Then another figure emerged from the hole in the plasti-glass. This time it was a female togruta sporting a cross-draw mini DC-17 pistol on their left side and a carbine. They were clad from head to toe in what appeared to be some sort of minimally armored air-tight bodysuit with only a thick hod that was connected to a black polarized face-mask.

The humanoid with the skull helmet signaled to the other three, who promptly got off of the four commandos and gave them thier DC-17 rifles back to them. The all-black armored humanoid allong with the green and kept an eye on the prisoners. The 'skull' humanoid turned

to them with their rifle partially raised.

Fi's com crackled and a small box popped up alerting him of an unauthorized com-line hack. He tried to block it, but the alert stayed there.

/Doing that is useless trooper, i've got all your freqs and channels already tagged./ Says a male voice tat carried a whole assault ship-full of authority.

/Identify yourself./ Niner says over the com.

/Not now. Get your gear and follow Sergeant Major Johnson, the one with the three chevrons and four rockers on his armor, gunships waiting to get us outta here. We got numerous undentifiables closing in faster than a cheetah after a gazelle and the faster we get outta here the longer lives we'll have, lets move!/ The one with the skull says as they gesture towards the black armored humanoid and the hole created by the ship outside.

Rex watches as three commandos help grab the prisoners and another grabs a large stack of data chips and at least three tac-pads. The Arbiter walks over, grabs a nikto, and slings it over his shoulder. Within half a minute, everybody was off of the heavily dammaged ship and onto the Pelican.

"Johnson, disengage the tube, Chief, tell the pilot to head back to the Trojan. We need to get outta here fast! The closest will be here in three!" Rex orders after severing the link with the four commandos.

The four clones were all huddled together at the back of the gunship. They were more than likely on a private com channel asking each other what the hell was going on and contacting thier CO on Corasaunt and sending in intel on himself and the first encounter with the UNSC in their galazy. He could imagine the pandemonium on the other end with the Jedi Council, Chancellor, and Senate moving to the edge of thier seats, deep into thier pocketbooks, and deep into their massive pool of rescources to try and get Lord Hood and Admiral Cole onto their sides.

"Mel, get me a direct line to Lord Hood, pritority one." Rex asks the AI in his tac-pad.

[Will do.]

Seconds later, Lord Hood popped up on his HUD.

/What do we got, Rich?/

"Four armored commandos from the GAR and three prisners, two non-human and one human. I can tell by their body language that they're in contact wth thier CO's. They know we're here know. What's the ETA of the unknowns?"

/Unknown one has accelerated and are showing up within the next five, second is within the next ten, the third unknown being monitored by the Dallas is about forty out. I'm not one hundred percent, but we may have another additional three unknowns within the next fifteen. This is one hell of a rat race and they're scrambling after something

and they want it bad./

"Yeah, and i may know what it is. One of these commandos has a whole bag full of data chips and what looks like seven to ten tac-pads. Just a sec, one's approaching. You need somethin'?"

/Yeah, my CO has four more men arriving in about five, a vessel is pursuing them and they don't have any guns. You got a fair-sized sip with heavy armament around here?/ The trooper asks.

"Just a sec. Lord Hood, close in the gap between us and you. We got confirmation that unknown one is another four man GAR commando team that is being pursued by at least an armed frigate which is number two. Three through six are still unconfirmed."

/Roger that. Captain Laffayette, get us parallel to that Pelican and warm up everything and alert the Dallas./ The video feed ended shortly after that.

"We got help on the way. You sit tight and we'll handle everything, just tell those other four to peel up and to ther right when they exit from FTL, we got a surprise waiting for the ship on thier ass." Rex says to the trooper as he heads twards the cockpit.

The door opens and he moves up next to the pilot.

"Can't this thing go any faster Warrant?" Rex asks.

/Negatory, we go any faster and we risk blowing an engine. What's the Trojan up to?/ The pilot asks.

"Just head her as fast as possible twards the open hanger, we got a bogey arriving in about fifteen who has some nice large-bores waiting to dust a confirmed green." Rex says.

/Oh shit! Danny!?!/

/Yo!// Says the copilot.

/Get on the engine stat monitors, i'm gonna red line it!// The pilot says, moving the throttle forward.

Delta Squad was in a bad spot. They had a CIS cruiser up thier tailpipe and they had no defencive weapons. The only ones able to help were the now rescued Omega Squad. All that Niner said was that they needed to pull up and to the right and that one of their rescuers said they had a 'surprise' waiting for the CIS ship.

Their ship dropped from FTL and they pulled up as told. The CIS ship appeared and a sudden flash emmited from the darkness of space and the Seppie exploded.

"What the FEK was that!?" Shouts Sev, Delts's sniper.

"No idea, but it was big." Boss, the Sergeant of the group.

"Boss, we got company!" Fixer, the tecnology expert, shouts from the plot's seat of the small 'borrowed' Seppie shuttle.

Boss, Sev, and Scortch, the demo and EX trooper, all rush to te front

of the shuttle. Out the viewport sits two craft. One is about as big as a Venator and a second about half it's size. Lights of different colors flash and shine across the ships and one section close to the front on both are illuminated.

In bright white letters, UNSC Trojan Horse and UNSC Dallas are proudly displayed. An illuminated section of the ship opened up and a light near the front signaled in morse code for them to enter and land inside. As they pass by the ship, gun emplacements are visible along with a large section of what appears to be torpedo or missile tubes along the side.

Then they enter the hanger. Inside they see orange and red lights rotating on the ceiling. A large lighted sign that has an up, down, left, and right. The outer most parts were red, inner was yellow, and the inner most was green. Currently, it was yellow and red off to the right.

/Move it to the left!/ A voice shouts over a speaker.

Fixer moves the ship left and it goes into the green. Then the lights go into the upper yellow.

/Down just a tad... And hold! Keep that position and proceed straight ahead and land on pad Alpha-five./ Says the voice.

Fixer moved the ship forward and saw pad A-5 marked out in bold yellow letters on the floor of the hanger. It was right next to a black ship with several armored humanoids and a xeno around the back of it. Four of which were the commandos of Omega.

The ship lands and the four commandos exit down the ramp. The four clone commandos that make up Omega walk over. A group of two black armored humanoids, a green armored humanoid, and a xeno watch them with a weary eye. A female Togruta is also near the black craft with the armored humanoids and xeno.

The group of eight look around the hanger. More humans and xenos move about, executing their current tasks. Vehicles with four wheels passed by below and above. A group of green armored individuals with rifles ran by chanting a cadence.

"When I go to heaven, what'll Saint Peter say?" Asks an older male.

"How did you earn your living, how did you earn your pay?" Says the entire group.

"And I'll reply with a whole lotta thunder!" The older says.

"Made my living killing down under!" The entire group replies.

"When I go bars, what'll the girls say?" The older man asks.

"How did you earn you living, how did you earn your pay?" The group repeats.

"My reply was with a cool kind of nod!" The older man shouts.

"Earned my living killing Covies for my god!" The group replies.

"When I go home, what'll the Covie-lovers say?" The man says.

"How did you earn your living, how did you earn your pay?" The group asks.

"And I reply as I pull out my knife!" The older man says.

"Get out of my way before I take your life!" The group shouts in reply.

"OOH-RAH!" The group says, including the older soldier as they pass.

"What the fek is a Covie?" Fi asks, innocently.

"Covie is slang for Covenant." Says a voice behind the eight.

They all whip around and find a black armored being from the black ship standing right behind Fi. The man removes his helmet and holds out his hand to Fi. The man resembles a clone, apart from the un-naturally light brown eyes, blonde hair, accent, and height.

"Colonel Rich Ed Xanders, United Nations Space Corps High Command Special Weapons, Tactics, and Intel group aka Thunder battalion. You are...?" The man says.

Fi takes the man's hand.

"CT-8015, Fi, Grand Army of the Republic's First Special Operations Brigade, Battalion Zero-Five sir." Fi replies, recognizing the man's rank.

"Alright Fi, introduce me to your...compatriots." The Colonel asks.

"Yes sir. This is RC-1309, Niner, my Sergeant, RC-1136, Darman, the second-in-command and demo expert, and RC-3222 Atin, the team's tech expert and resident psychopath." Fi says, gesturing to each.

"Yeah, so says the wise-ass sniper and medic." Atin remarks.

Rex couldn't help but chuckle. He shook his head and cracked a smile.

"What about you four?" Rex asks the other four commandos in the different colored armor.

"Sergeant RC-1138, Boss sir. This is Delta squad of the same battalion as Omega there. This is RC-1140, Fixer, technical and mechanical expert, RC-1262, Scortch, demo expert and wiseass, then that's RC-1207, Sev, the squad sniper." Boss says.

"Whose also the psychopath of the team sir." Says Scortch.

"Scortch, you want a repeat of what happened on Thessa Five?" Sev asks, a little too calm and precise for Rex's liking.

"Ahh, no thanks." Scortch says, clamming up, moving from being next to Sev to the other side of his Sergeant.

"Sir, what's the United Nations Space Command?" Niner asks.

"You'll be told. You eight are to follow me over there to the bridge. The Admiral wants to talk to you." Rex says, guesturing to the door that led into the main corridor.

26. Chapter 26

UNSC TROJAN HORSE

SOMEWHERE NEAR CODENAME: NORMANDY

BRIDGE

As Colonel Xanders led them through the ship, Darman saw many things that were different from most GAR ships he had been on. There were small groups from two to four armed troopers moving around with an armband that had the letters M and P in bold white.

Almost every person he encountered had different and yet the same markings on their uniforms. The armor of the xenos were different colors, probably to distinguish ranks quickly durring battle. The humans, on the other hand, seemed to use symbols to distinguish ranks.

It was clear from the start that they were not GAR, Republic, or CIS personell. Another thing he noticed was the prescence of females aboard the ship. And some were in combat-ready gear and carrying weapons. A few had also been talking with the males aboard, something that would never occur in the GAR.

They were of another origin, one that, to Darmans knowledge, had just entered at the worst, and yet the best, time possible. Then they reached a door with a star in the center. It slid open and the eight commandos walked into a room with a holo-table in the center with several men around it in dark grey uniforms and a single one in a pure, spotless white uniform. The man looked up and saw the Colonel and the Togruta.

"These the people from those two ships, Colonel?" The man asks.

"Yes sir. We found three more aboard the drifter where we got four of these men. One's human and is in the med-bay under guard and the other two are xenos and are in the brig in seperate cells." The Colonel reports.

"Good. The Dallas just reported that we'll have visual on one of the unknowns. I want these eight to ID them as they show up so Captain Lafayette and Commander Mancuso don't plug a torpedo up their ass by mistake and that we plug the torpedo up the right one's ass." The man says, turning twards a large viewport.

"ETA of four remaining targets?" The man asks.

"Target four and five are arrving within six, target six has

accelerated and is now at fifteen." A man says from a console.

"Captain Lafayette, warm up the MAC and inform the Dallas to prep her torpedoes. ETA of four and five?" The man asks again.

"Arrival of both are now." Says the person behind the console.

Two CIS cruisers leave hyperspace and start moving towards the Trojan.

"Weapons, targeting solution and prepare to fire on my order." The man says.

"Those friends of yours?" The Colonel asks.

"No, they're enemy cruisers. Armed with moderate to light cannon." Niner quickly replies.

"Weapons, let 'er rip." The old man says.

The lights dim and a thumping boom is felt. The first CIS cruiser explodes into a ball of light and is gutted by some sort of gun. The ship nearby called the Dallas fired something out the front of their ship. Seconds later, the other CIS cruiser was blown apart, leaving the partially destroyed ship drifting.

Hood turned to the nav officer after watching the two confirmed enemy craft be blown into oblivion.

"Where's that last contact?" He asks the young Ensign.

"Arriving within five sir." The Ensign says.

"Very well. Captain Lafayette, contact Fleet Admiral Cole and tell him that we've engaged and destroyed multiple hostile craft and to stand by for emergency slip-space jump with his half of the Fleet." Hood orders.

"Yes sir." Captain Lafayette replies.

The final contact appears and it's very different from all the other ships that had been seen by Hood before. This one was about as large as a light to medium sized cruiser. But it was triangular and had a tall tower rising above the rest of the ship. A rotunda with six spokes was proudly displayed on both sides of the craft.

"This one of yours?" Rich asks.

"Yeah, it's a cruiser arriving to 'rescue' us from that drifting pile of metal that used to be a ship." One of the armored humanoids says.

"Coms, send a first contact file to that ship. Tell Cole to get his fleet on standby for action and that we're opening negotiations with an previously unencountered faction and may need an intimidation factor. Will send if reinforcements are needed." Hood orders as he moves towards the holo-table.

"File sent. Not sure if they'll reply though." The coms officer

says.

"Even if they have to reply with a message-in-a-bottle shot from a cannon, it'll be good enough for me." Hood says.

RAS VENATOR FEARLESS

3 THOUSAND KLICKS CORE-SIDE OF PERLEMIAN NODE

RED ZERO RESPONDER

Jedi General Etain Tur-Mukan had just finished up a battle near Bothan space when her ship recieved the call. A Red Zero, the highest priority scream for help across all bands and frequencies. She knew the commandos of Omega personally and shared a connection with Darman, the groups demo and second in command.

She had just arrived and saw the hulks of three burning CIS ships and two other craft nearby in formation with each other. One was about the size of her Venator and the other was about half the size of an Acclamator. Then the coms officer spoke up.

"Sir, i'm receiving a signal coming from the ships off our bow. Seems to contain a data file they want us to look at." The coms officer says.

"Open the data file. Scan it for any threats or intrusions into our mainframe." Etain orders.

"Scans complete sir, there's nothing that raises a red flag." Commander Gett, the CO of the unit of the 41st that was currently aboard the Venator and under Etain's command.

"Open the file. Let's see what they want." Etain orders.

"It appears to be a request for a face-to-face meeting, exchange of intel on each other, and the transfer of the commandos of Omega and Delta with three prisoners in so-called 'neutral' territory. They also wanted to have a meeting arranged at their capitol with their government to negotiate a treaty or pact of some sort." Gett says, reading the now opened file.

"Coms, send a reply stating that we're contacting our superiors and will send their reply. Also alert them to potential incoming CIS ships." Etain orders.

"Reply and alert sent." Says the Com officer

"Sir, we've recieved a reply. They say they're contacting their superiors and will get back to us when they do so. They're also warning of a hostile fleet in the area that may be approaching." Says Captain Lafayette.

"Well shit. Give Cole the signal to drop in and form up. Alert him and our...companion across the way not to shoot at each other." Hood orders.

"What do you want me to do with them sir?" Rich asks, gesturing to the eight heavily armed troopers on the bridge.

"Show them around. Give them the basics on us and our current objective." Hood says.

"Will do sir. Alright gentlemen, if you'll just follow me. Oh, please keep your rifles slung and safties on, then everything will be fine and you won't get shot and create a second inter-galactic incident this week." Rich says, leading the eight out of the bridge.

Hood heard his last comment and chuckled. The Colonel had provided as much intel as he could remember. That intel was proving itself to be as valuable as two Vindication-class battleships. Fleet formations, craft identifications, tactics, armor, weapons, everything. That had been presented to him via a stack of over fifteen seperate data-pads, each with just a single subject and topic described in great detail.

If the so-called 'Galactic Republic' or 'Confederaton of Independent Systems' tried anything, it would end up with the UNSC being crowned the victor. Almost nothing could undo the bravery, inginuity, and pure determination of the UNSC and the Sangheili Seperatists. Lord Hood turned away from the holo-table and went to the front of the ship. He stared out into the void and wondered what the Covies had up their sleeve and why they were even there in that galazy.

COURASAUNT

SENATE CHAMBER

EMERGENCY SENATE SESSION

JUNE 4 ABG

The Galactic Republic's Senate was abuzz with activity. A message from a ship, the RAS Venator Fearless, had sent a message to the Jedi, the Grand Army of the Republic, and the Senate stating that an unknown faction wanted to have a meeting with the Chancellor and Senate on Courasaunt. Padme Amidala was attending the session with Bail Organa, Riyo Chuchi, Mon Mothma, and the visiting Dutchess of Mandalore, Satine Kryze.

Watching the session from a nearby hover-podium were Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker, Master Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Maser Yoda. They were there to see what the session developed. The entire planet was watching and waiting to hear the Senates decision on the matter.

Durring this debate, which was well into it's fourth hour, the Senate was mostly arguing if they should or should not let this group near Courasaunt or send them to another world close by. A point had been made by a zealous pro-Republican senator that they may be a CIS advance invasion party. One that shuld be fired on immedeately.

But Padme had a different card she was just about to play. She signaled to Mass Amedda, who then silenced the other senators.

"Senator Amidalia, you have the floor." Says the Speaker of the Senate.

"Thank you Mr. Speaker. Senators and Representatives of the senate, i know this is a...unique situation, but we must advise caution! If we make the wrong choice, we may end up distroying all that we've been fighting for. If we make the right choice, we may just win the war and gain a new ally which may have resources and needs that they need or can trade for a benifit of all. I propose that we vote on this subject now and elect a delegaton to meet these...individuals and give them a tour of Courasaunt. Then we may move on to more pressing matters that need attention." Padme says.

"I second that motion!" Says Bail Organa.

"As do I!" Says Riyo.

"All those in favor, vote now!" Says Amedda.

Senators and Representatives from around the chamber send their vote via data-pad to the Chancellors podium. The same is done with those in opposition. The votes were automatically counted from all 2000 in the chamber.

"The votes are in. There are 975 against and 1,025 in favor for allowing these...individuals to visit Courasaunt. All Senators will report to thier respective offices to await the election of the delagation to greet them with the Chancellor. Meeting adjourned!" Says Amedda.

Padme left her podium allong with Senator and General of the Gungan Army, Jar-Jar Binks. The three jedi met the two Naboo Senators in the corridor.

"Padme, how goes the glory of politics?" Anakin asks as he walks up.

"Ani, Master Kenobi, and Master Yoda, a pleasant surprise." Padme says, hiding the fact that she was bursting with excitment.

She hadn't seen Anakin in several months and was very happy to see her husband. Then she senses something has her husband in a rut. He seemed somewhat depressed, as did the other two Jedi Masters.

"Is there something wrong?" She asks.

"Ahsoka and six younglings are missing. Their ship was found near Florrum by a pirvateer under GAR employment named Hondo Okana. All that was left was the burnt-out shell of the Crucible, the ship they were aboard. He scoured the wreckage, and found no evidence of bodies. Most of it's frame looked like it had been torn appart for certain materials." Kenobi says.

"They're presumed...deceased then?" Padme half asks and half states.

"Yes. But, evidence from a small rescue-investigation team made up of two frigates found evidence from a flight-recorder that was still active that a fleet of CIS ships with some purple craft is what attacked the Crucible. We're hoping that these newcomers can shed light on these craft and their purpose." Anakin answers, depressed that his one and only padawan, who had been knighted only two years ago, may be dead, drifting in space with six younglings which were no

older than nine or aboard some ship a prisoner. Or worse.

"I'm so sorry Ani. She was a good Jedi and an even better person. I send my sympathies and prayers that she is alive with the six younglings." Padme says.

UNSC TROJAN

ODST DECK

THUNDER BARRACKS

JUNE 2550

When the doors to the so-called 'ODST' deck, Niner was surprised to see upright and open escape pods. Each was personalized and weapons were in racks next to them. Names were above them with three letter abbreviations. An emblem on the wall matched the insignia the Colonel had on his left shoulder.

A half of a human skull with crossed rifles and a long-hilted blade of some sort going through the skull and out through the top of the mouth. The background was a shiloette of the one person pods with a storm cloud above it. The motto 'Thundering Into Hell' was displayed below the blades tip. It sparked an interest in Niner.

"What's this part of the ship about?" Fi asks, staring at the painted insignia on the bulkhead wall.

"Orbital Drop Shock Trooper high and low-orbit insertion pods. My Special Operations unit drops from the atmosphere in these pods with their respective weapons, ammo, and equipment to last a full twenty-four hours of non-stop fighting and then some." Colonel Xanders explains.

"You drop from ships orbiting planets to the surface in these?" Atin asks, who couldn't even ponder the idea of dropping from orbit in an escape pod into battle.

"Yep. Sometimes the ship will enter the mesosphere, which is about 100 kilometers from the surface, and we'll strap on rebreathers and jump out of the hangers if the weather is good and there's no confirmed sightings anti-aircraft with the assistance of parachutes or para-foils. Scares the shit out of the enemy when we swoop in. Especially when we all wear helmets with customized skulls engraved onto them. I've gotten the name 'Spectre' and my unit has gotten the name 'Ghosts' from our enemies." The Colonel explains.

"So it's a shock-and-awe tactic. Right?" Darman asks.

"Shock-awe-and-petrify is the term we use. But, it's pretty much the same. The unit is a Specail Warfare, Intel, and Tactics, or SWIT group. We have about two battalions and i'm the boss. What i say and order can swing a battle in either direction. And i've learned that the hard way over the years, as do most. I've sacraficed men, machinery, and minds to achieve and uphold a victory. Ask any of my subordinate officers or SNCOs, and they'll say the same thing." Colonel Xander explains.

"Why are you here sir? You and your people?" Fixer asks.

"Fixer..." Boss warns.

"No, it's alright. All that i can tell you is that a certain genocidal group that tried to eleminate my people has arrived here and has joined up with a group called the Confederacy of Independent Systems. We're here to stop them from taking over our home and where ever we are now. Their goal is to re-kindle an ancient war thousands, if not millions of years ago that was between this place and our home. We're here to stop that from happening." The Colonel explains.

"How can two ships stop an entire army? Two for that matter." Scortch asks.

"Scortch, this is a recon force. They have a fleet or fleets at a staging point nearby. More than likely a planet or an instalation of some sort. Right?" Sev asks.

"Exactly. The Dallas had a few unknowns on their scanners and contacted Lord Hood. Then they recieved your SOS and we responded as fast as we could." Xanders says, gesturing to Omega squad.

Then a voice came over a loudspeaker.

/Colonel Xanders, please report to the bridge ASAP with the...guests./ A male voice announces.

"Well, looks like our little 'tour' as ended. Back to the bridge. You'll get to see the rest later." The Colonel says, grabbing a rifle from a rack sitting next to a pod with his name above it.

27. Chapter 27

****CHANGES HAVE BEEN APPLIED TO THE CLASSES OF COVENANT AND UNSC SHIPS. AND YES, I DO KNOW THEIR TRUE SIZES.****

RAS FEARLESS

BRIDGE

UNKNOWN LOCATION NEAR PERLEMIAN NODE

JUNE 4 ABG

A message entered the com-suite in what was known as 'the pit'. The pit was a sunken area in the center of the bridge to maximize the space in the bridge so it wasn't cluttered with consoles and no room to move around. The coms officer decrypted the message and handed it to the supervising Liutenaunt.

"Commander Gett, General!" The LT shouts.

"What is it Liutenaunt?" Etain asks.

"Reply from the Senate. We're ordered to escort unknowns to Courasaunt and help escort them to the Senate building where their delegation and the Chancellor will be introduced and negotiate some

sort of treaty is to take place. Then we'll proceed with a tour of the major sights of Courasaunt with the delegation if negotiations succeed and terms of a treaty are agreed upon." The clone officer reads.

"Send the ship across the way the same message. Also tell them to prepare their delegation and to proceed to the exact coordinates given and that we'll escort them in. After they transfer the clones of Omega and Delta to us." Etain orders.

"Yes sir." says the LT.

UNSC TROJAN

BRIDGE

JUNE 2550

It had been a few minutes since the reply from the triangular ship sent had been recieved. Lord Hood had already choosen his escort as did Arbiter Vadum. Admiral Cole allong with the majority of Thunder and all but Spartan Blue Team would stay with the fleet.

Cole was en-route with the UNSC Hornet, UNSC Reach, UNSC Pillar of Autumn, UNSC In Amber Clad, UNSC Forward Unto Dawn, and three captured former Covenant craft. Those were a CAS Assault Carrier named the Shadow of Intent and two battle cruisers found in a repair station on 'Normandy' with moderate to light dammage that was quickly repaired. In total, ten ships would be heading to 'Courasaunt' with the Sangheili and Human combined allied force aboard each ship.

RAS FEARLESS

"General, two ships has left the unknown and are heading twards us." A trooper says, alerting Etain.

"Sir, a message frm the ship says that omega and Delta squads, three prisoners, a...and six jedi initiates with a care-taker droid are aboard that ship and they are requesting a hanger door to be opened to allow them to land and deliver the 'passengers' and their 'baggage'. They also warn that they have a full fleet inbound to accompany them to Courasaunt for escort and security reasons." The coms LT says.

"Guide them in trooper. If anything happens, i'll be in the hanger greeting our new aquantances." Etain says, heading out the bridge door and to the turbolifts.

After a several minute turbolift ride and a fast-paced walk, Etain reached the main hanger, which was open and saw two green, angular sips enter, swing around, and land next to each other. The doors of one opened up and several armed and armored beings emerged with rifles and carbines.

One stood out from the others. The male was well over seven feet tall, was armed with a side-arm and several combat blades, had the upper half of a human skull on his helmets visor. It scared her slightly and several troopers in the bay took cover and drew side-arms or carbines. A recipie for disaster.

"Hold your fire!" Etain shouts.

Every trooper heeded her orders and the unknowns rifles stayed pointed at the floor. Then the 'skull' one talked.

"You the CO of this vessel?" The male asks.

"I am. If i may, who are you?" Etain asks the man.

"Colonel Rich Xanders, CO of Special Warfare, Intel, and Tactics group Thunder. My superior, Admiral Hood, gave me orders to escort your troopers, six kids, a mech, and three POWs into your custody ma'am. Open 'er up Gunny!" The man shouts over to the second ship.

The back opens and revels the eight blue-lit visors of Delta and Omega, a droid, six jedi Initiates, and two Nikto and a human who had restraints on their ankles and wrists. Several more black armored figures jumped down and helped unload the bound prisoners and helped the jedi initiates off the ship. A few crates were also unloaded and placed onto the deck.

One that emerged had three stripes in a very light grey with some curved stripes below them. He was also rather large and had a rifle slung across his chest. He appeared to be the Colonels second in command. The armed humanoids dispered around the craft and took defencive postures. As soon as the un-loading of the commandos, younglings, prisoners, and cargo was completed, the unknowns re-boarded their craft and left.

Omega, Delta, the droid, and the younglings approached her after the ships left and headed back to their ships. A squad of troopers had already taken the three prisoners frm the unknowns and were already on their way to the brig.

"We meet again, Omega. How are you four doing?" Etain asks Omega squad.

"Very well now sir." Niner says.

"Nice to see you again sir. Still using that conc rifle Darman gave you?" Fi asks.

"Yes i am. There's not a single day where i don't heft that hulk of pure destructive power around. Now, i wasn't told about six jedi initiates and Professor Huyang being aboard those ships. Would you care to elaborate, Professor?" Etain asks the centuries old droid and educator.

[The Crucible, MY ship, was attacked by some...beings, torn apart for resources, blown up, myself, the six initiates, and an accompanying Jedi Knight named Tano were locked in prison cells, taken to a surface instalation, held prisoner there in a large prison camp, freed by those humanoids and their xeno compatriots, placed aboard a ship, and eventually brought here. I had no idea where we were off to when they asked us to board those two ships until the back doors opened.] The droid explains.

"Where's Knight Tano then?" Etain asks, concerned about the location and state of the fellow Knight and Jedi.

"No idea. Didn't see another Jedi on the ship or see anybody who wasn't Togruta." Delta's leader, Boss explains.

"We saw a Togruta, but i have no idea if it was a Jedi or not. They were armed with a DC-15 pistol and some sort of carbine."

"Alright then. Looks like we've still got an MIA Jedi Knight." Etain says, sighing.

Then her com beeped.

"Yes?"

/General, it's Commander Gett, you might want to come back to the bridge and take a look at this.../ The clone officer says in a tone he rarely uses.

"I'll be there in a few. " Etain says, turning towards one of the hanger doors.

Within minutes, she's back on the bridge just in time to see the bridge crew in full panic mode.

"What are these things trooper?" Gett asks a trooper at a console.

"No idea Commander. They seem to be some sort of...wormhole-type anomaly." The trooper says.

Outside the plasti-glass view screen, several wormhole-type anomalies that were a bright blue and purple. Then something appeared out of each. Ships of multiple different sizes and shapes appeared, three of which were of totally different design. The largest was easily a few kilometers long.

Each had a warlike and military stance. The resence of a large weapon-like emplacement on the front strongly discouraged any hostile actions. They were also bristling with visible turrets and weapon emplacements. Then three more arrived and joined the larger 'fleet'.

"General, i just recieved a message from the unknown, those ships are apparently their escort fleet along with their...compatriots." The coms trooper says.

"Send an alert to Courasaunt. Unknowns are en-route to Courasaunt via unknown FTL method. Be on the look out for wormhole-type anomalies and to evacuate area where anomalies appear due to arriving ships from several hundred meters to a few kilometers in size." Etain orders.

"Message sent sir. They are also awaiting grid coordinates of Courasaunt and are stating they are ready to move out when we are." The LT in 'the pit' reports.

"Turn the ship about one-eighty and send them the coordinates. Tell them we'll escort them so the other GNR ships won't start blasting at them." Etain orders.

COURASAUNT

ORBIT

JUNE 4 ABG

As the UNSC Trojan, Hornet, Reach, Pillar of Autumn, Forward Unto Dawn, In Amber Clad, and Dallas exited slip-space with the Shadow of Intent and the two former Covenant battle cruisers, the bridge crew of each stared at the planet that seemed to be one large city. The GNR ship was just ahead of them and a small cluster of more GNR ships was in front of that ship.

"Fleetwide orders to all ship Captains and bridge officers, safties on and be ready for anything. If things go south, fire everything at once and initiate Cole Protocol to 'Normandy' unless ordered different by myself or Admiral Cole, mark it priotity zero, urgent." Hood orders, not wanting to take any chances.

"Yes sir. Coms, send that order." Relays Captain Lafayette.

Hood turns and sees Rich waiting in full gear with his rifle locked and loaded. Miss Tano was standing next to him. She looked afraid, and not for herself. He had seen that same look when he joined the UNSC from his wife when he 'shoved off' for the first time.

"Captain Lafayette, you have the bridge. Colonel Xanders, Miss Tano, may i have a word with you in private?" He asks.

"Yes sir." Rich answers, slinging his rifle over his shoulder and carrying his helmet in his left hand.

Hood leads them into a briefing room and blacks out thevariable transparency glass.

"Alright Rex, what's this planet about?" Hood asks, not bthering using the former clone officers 'real' name. The shocked look on the female Togrutas face was very apparent.

"It's all one city. Multiple layers and districts. The Senate, Buisiness, Jedi Temple, Military, Residential, Industrial, even underground levels that are teeming with the undesireables, illegals, and such." 'Rich' replies.

"He knows?" Tano asks Rich.

"Yes, i do know. I'm one of two who helped get the Colonel here a new identity and practically a new life. One with full rights, pay, housing and such. Unlike the 'Galactic Republics' military. Clones, a very cowardly way to fight a war, no offense to the former." Hood says.

"Not an issue sir. I feel the same, as does Mel." Rich says as Mel materializes on a holo-table nearby in full battle gear.

"Who's the other then?" The Togruta asks, very concerned.

[A Doctor named Cathrine Halsey. She fixed his aging and then some. All are good things Ahsoka.] Mel explains.

"Well, now that i know you know, i'm not comfortable letting Rex here groundside. They find him out, they'll kill him and then declare war on you for any reason they can think of." She says.

"I told you already 'Soka, it's a one in one million chance they'll get what they want. Even then, it's a one and a billion chance that they can eve get their hands on me since i have records of my entire 'life' as a natural born UNSC citizen and inabitant of the Sol system." The Colonel explains.

"Now, do we have this matter cleared up?" Hood asks.

"I guess we do." Miss Tano says.

"Good. This a very complex maze of doing things right. Has she made her decision yet?" Hod asks Rex.

"No, she has not."

"What decision?" Ahsoka asks.

"You have a choice Miss Tano. You can stay with the UNSC or join your Jedi friends and have little or no interaction with the UNSC and Rich. I must have this answer before the delegation leaves. I know it's a difficult choice, but it is one that is a must." Hood says as he leaves the room.

"Is that why you asked me that earlier?" Ahsoka asks Rex.

"Yeah. I told him about you and our little...relationship. He told me to give you the option of leaving or staying." Rex says, sitting down on the corner of a table.

"I'm staying Rex. But, how do i explain this to the council?" She asks.

"You don't. I explain to them that you died durring the battle in the prison and were cremated and the ashes buried with an 'Unknown' marker in a cemetary with full military honors. The only thing is that you'll have to change your name and your facial markings." Rex says, outlining the entire plan.

"That may actually work. Changing my name is no problem, my markings, however, may be. But, it's not impossible and i can do it with a little help from the Force." Ahsoka says.

"Good. But don't change them up too much." Rex says.

"I won't. And i already have a new name."

"Well, let's hear it." Rex says.

"Ashla. I haven't thought of a last name though." Ahsoka says.

"Then take mine." Rex says.

"Are you hinting that we...?" Ahsoka begins to ask.

"Might as well. We've always been together, so why not make it known?" Rex asks.

"True. And you don't even have to ask." Ahsoka says as she gives him a kiss.

28. Chapter 28

COURASAUNT

SENATE BUILDING

JUNE 4 ABG

For the citizens of Courasaunt, it was just another day. But for the Jedi, Senate, and GAR, it was not. The arrival of the United Nations Space Corps and Covenant Seperatist Alliance was a great shock to those who knew. The first contact with two previously unencountered civilizations for at least several hundred thousand years.

In order to keep the civilian population from creating a mass-panic, the meeting with the UNSC would be kept discreet and under the radar of the media and the majority of the public. The UNSC fleet had arrived and were quickly ushered behind one of Courasaunts moons.

Civillian traffic were not allowed to go within a certain distance with that moon. If that were breached, fighters and/or a Venator would divert the craft willingly, or by force if it was necessary. The UNSC fleet was left under the command of Admiral Cole and Fleetmaster Rutas 'Vandam until Admiral Hood and the Arbiter returned. In order to keep things quiet, only two vessels would be allowed to leave the fleet under the ruse of two new transports being tested out by the GAR.

Both vessels were the D79-TC Pelican. Both were armed with the standard load-out and had an extended 'blood-tray'. This was to accomodate the escort team consisting of Colonel Xanders, Staff Sergeant 'Hulk' Kowalski, Sergeant Major Johnson, Petty Officer First Class 'Doc' O'Brian, the Chief, and five SpecOps Sangheili with full combat loadouts.

With Rex on escort detail, Captain Carols Perez was in command of Thunder with Master Gunny Stacker as SNCO. Everything had been planned out and the two Pelicans were already approaching a hovering landing-pad between the Senate and Jedi Temple. Being back on Courasaunt was wierd for Rex, being gone for several UNSC years. Nothing from what he saw out of the open troop bay door looked different.

Then he felt the Pelican tilt backwards and slow. Landing process was beginning. The surface of a landing pad appeared and then it touched down.

"You ready sir?" Rex asks Hood.

"As ready as i can be." Hood replies.

"Right. Let's move!" Rex says, adresssing the escort team.

On the landing pad, Captain Fives and several other troopers were

awaiting to escort the group of diplomats to the Senate. After that, they would be transported to the Jedi Temple. He hadn't been told much except to expect humanoids and a possibility of non-humanoids.

Then he saw movement. Several black armored humanoids with weapons emerged from the back of the craft on the right with an older human male wearing a white hat, some type of armor that was being worn over a white uniform, and the man had a side-arm holstered on their right leg.

The black armored humanoids were massive. Each were at least over six foot tall and appeared to be nothing but muscle. Then something else caught his eye. Movement from the second craft.

He was shocked to see a very tall non-humanoid species escorting a gold and bronze armored being of the same species. Three of the five escorts wore black armor and two wore a very dark red armor. These beings were well over seven feet tall and carried very...unique shaped weaponry. A few of which he had seen on Naboo in the hands of the Gungan rebels.

It was a possibility that they were the ones that had supported the Gungans and the CIS. But if they were, why would they arrive on Corrie for a diplomatic meeting, or help the Jedi? He would find out eventually. Both groups reached his position and stopped.

"I'm Captain CT-5555, i've been ordered to escort you to the Senate building. If you'll follow me, we can get going." Fives says.

They board an enclosed transport and the humanoids and xenos sit and stand in a large protective barrier around the two 'delegates'.

The transport to the Senate took several minutes. It slowed and landed near an entrance that was away from the prying eyes of the public entrance where most media outlets had at least one permanent vid-drone monitoring what happened and who was coming and going.

They dis-embark the transport and head inside. Fives led the fairly large group to a conference room near the Chancellors office. The Chancellor and a few Senators were already awaiting their arrival.

Inside the conference room, Padme Amidala was slightly nervous, yet excited. It was one of the now very unique and very rare situations to ever happen during recent modern history. The encounter of a previously unknown civilization. One advanced enough for space travel.

Her adrenaline spiked when Captain Fives, the replacement for Captain Rex, entered the room and several large armed and armored humanoids entered with several large non-humanoids entered. An older human male wearing a white hat, white armor with five stars, strips of multi-colored ribbon, and numerous medals over a white uniform shirt with matching pants with red and yellow stripe going down both sides. A side-arm sat on the man's leg in a holster.

The non-humanoid 'delegate' wore a gold, black, and bronze colored armor with a very elaborately made cloak. Three of the non-humanoid escorts were in black armor and the other two were in a very deep,

dark red. Very unique and exotic-looking weapons were at their hips and cradled in their arms.

One of the armored humanoids stood directly behind the older man and crossed his arms. For some reason, he seemed familiar to her, but she didn't know from where. Then the meeting officially began.

"I'm Cancellor Palpytene of the Galactic Senate. I would like to be the first to officially welcome you to the Galactic Republic and hope that we can work out a mutual agreement and possibly allow you into our Republic." Palpytene says.

The older man raises his left eyebrow and looked unamused.

"I'm Grand Admiral Hood of the United Nations Space Corps. The man standing directly behind my right shoulder is Colonel Xanders of Special Warfare, Intel, and Tactics battalion Thunder. I would like to say straight out that the UNSC has no interest in joining your so-called 'Galactic Republic' or 'Galactic Senate'." The older man, Admiral Hood, says.

"And the Covenant Separatist Alliance shares that interest." Says the gold-armored xeno, who was apparently male.

"May I ask you who you are?" Palpytene asks.

"Arbiter of the CSA and Kaidon of Vadam Keep." The being says.

"The Senate respects your stance, but will keep the option to join open for consideration. From what I've been told, your welcome was not a kind one. We're currently in the fourth year of a nasty civil war with the Confederacy of Independent Systems led by a man named Count Dooku." The Chancellor says.

"That wasn't our first encounter with the CIS. In fact, the only reason we are here is that a very violent and genocidal group called the Covenant have apparently allied with this 'CIS' and are currently basing out of your galaxy. We arrived here with a very large combat fleet that is being reinforced and we are to begin a campaign to eradicate this group and its allies." The Admiral says.

"If I may ask, why are you at war with this 'Covenant', and how did you discover this supposed link with the CIS?" Padme asks.

"What is your name ma'am?" Hood asks.

"Senator Amidala of Naboo." Padme answers.

"Colonel Xanders can answer that question better than I can miss." The Admiral says.

"The Covenant are, or were, a group of multiple non-humanoid species which the Arbiters people were once part of. They attacked us for no apparent reason and have been waging open warfare on our people. They'll settle for nothing less than total destruction of our species. We've been fighting them for the past six years. The first four, we were being forced back, but for the past two, we've been hitting them back harder and harder. So far there's been a few billion in casualties, civilian and military combined, with billions of dollars worth of damage and some planets totally uninhabitable."

The Colonel says.

"The Colonel recently uncovered some intel which was passed on directly to me. It was a set of coordinates and mentions of the 'Confederacy'. We followed those coordinates after allying ourselves with the Covenant Separatist Alliance, which was formed about...one, maybe two years now? Am I correct about this, Arbiter?" Admiral Hood asks.

"You are correct. We started as an insurrection and became a large group of formidable allies of our once enemies, the UNSC." The Arbiter says.

"Anyway, we arrived and found an enemy fleet guarding a planetside prison. We assaulted the prison, freed the inmates, and killed one of three leaders of the Covenant. Then we received a distress signal from your Special Operations group Omega, rescued them and group Delta from being vaporized from three hostile vessels. They were returned to an RAS Fearless with six 'Jedi younglings' with a mech in addition that we found in the prison." The Admiral says.

"We had also found a 'Jedi Knight'. She called herself Ahoka Thano or something similar." Rex says, baiting the hook for his very fictional and intricate tale of the prison assault.

"Ahsoka? Ahsoka Tano?" Senator Riyo asks.

"What's your name miss?" The Arbiter asks.

"Senator Chuchi of Pandora." The female Pandorian replies.

"That may have been her name. Anyway, she helped in the following battle before a Hunter, a very large creature with a literal cannon for an arm, killed her. She was buried with full UNSC Military honors after her remains were cremated. She's placed in a grave marked 'Unknown' due to her remains never being identified properly." Rex says.

"Can her remains be returned to the Republic in any way?" The Chancellor asks.

"Sadly, no. A military or battlefield gravesite cannot be disturbed due to that it would be marked as a disgrace to those whose loved ones remain could not be recovered. The graves headstone, however, will be replaced with one that has her name and a few other details written on it. Her name will also be added to 'The Wall of the Fallen' at the UNSC headquarters." Admiral Hood says.

"Her name will also be inscribed into the centuries old Vadam battle poem back on Sanghelios. Her honor and heroism will be immortalized." The Arbiter says, knowing of the elaborate plan placed down by Rex.

Padme was devastated. She knew that her husband, Anakin, would be hit hard by her loss. She knew he was wanting to know her fate and where or if her remains could be found or recovered if she had passed on. Padme would have to tell him and Obi-Wan the heartbreaking news.

The rest of the meeting passed and ended with the agreement of a large embassy to be built on Courasaut for the UNSC and CSA to both

inhabit, the establishment of trading of civilian goods such as foodstuffs and medical supplies, some technologies, and an agreement to not trade major military hardware such as ships and any weapons was also made.

The hyperdrive would also be allowed to be sold to the UNSC and CSA for some civilian ships. The UNSC and CSA declined to share their version of FTL altogether due to its complex operation and complicated production processes. They also added that if it was altered a certain way, improperly operated, or installed, it would make the outcome of it being activated disastrous. That swayed the Chancellor to ban it from being used by anybody but the UNSC and CSA.

Military aid would be at a minimum and would only be if the UNSC came across battle in progress, be called in due to the Covenant, them being the only other help in the area able to assist, or on missions of high importance. The Republic would send reinforcements to the UNSC if a battle was going south and they needed help and couldn't send any of their ships.

After the meeting ended with mutual agreements on the majority of the subjects discussed, the UNSC and CSA left with Captain Fives to the rear entrance. They were heading to the Jedi Temple to meet with the Jedi Temple. Padme could only hope that Master Windu's legendary temper and lack of most emotions wouldn't make the UNSC and CSA retract their agreement and decide to have nothing to do with the Republic.

29. Chapter 29

COURASAUNT

JEDI TEMPLE

CENTRAL HANGER

JUNE 4 ABG/2550

Jedi Master Aayla Secura had been appointed to a very important and rare task. She was to lead a fair sized group of delegates from a foreign power that was not of the Republic's knowledge. As two gunships landed, Aayla was slightly surprised at the sheer size of the humans and the non-humanoids. What shocked her more was the fact they had no force signature whatsoever. She was taught that without the force, life could not exist. Master Qui-Gon Jinn had challenged this millennia old belief.

Apparently, his challenge was now backed by fact and the belief turned to fiction. A very frightening one. That raised the question of where they originated from. Every life-form in the Republic had a signature, it may be a small signature, but they all had one.

Aayla was forced to revert back to body language to determine their intent. So far, she believed their intent was peaceful and democratic.

"Welcome to the Jedi Temple. I'm Jedi Master Aayla Secura. The council is awaiting your arrival. Please follow me." Aayla says.

She could tell the armored humans and non-humanoids were tense and on edge. They seemed to expect an ambush around the next corner. She had no idea why, but she would learn of it eventually. As would everybody else.

One question on her mind was that of the fate of Ahsoka Tano. Her six youngling students with Professor Huyang had been delivered to the RAS Fearless without her. That either meant she was still missing, with these people, or was dead. She also wondered if they were going to help with the threat that the CIS posed and what else the Senate and these...people had agreed to.

They arrived at the large double doors that led into the council chambers. The doors were the only ones of their kind. They were made up of 100% wood from the trees that once grew on Courasaunt before it was turned into the city it was now.

They were engraved with jedi symbols of old and a large metal plate in the center had two crossed lightsabers with the current seal of the order on it. Four temple guards stood to each side of the doors with their pikes in their hands.

The humans and xenos stopped dead and closed in so they were shoulder to shoulder around their delegates. The humans raised their rifles slightly and moved forward with the xenos behind them. One of the guards approached Aayla.

"They cannot enter with that many weapons. Tell them that only two may enter." The guard says.

Aayla turns to address the group.

"We can only allow the delegate and one guard each to enter." Aayla says.

"Miss, we will enter as one full group or not at all." A human says.

"How about two guards each and the delegates? Would that be satisfactory?" Aayla asks.

The armored man who had spoken out turned and talked to the white uniformed male. The man then turned back to her.

"Yes. But the others must stay outside these doors and we will not be unarmed in any way, shape, or form." The man says.

The temple guard nods and the two doors swing open. The largest two of the armored humans, one in black, one in green, and the two dark red xenos escort their delegates into the council chamber. Aayla stays outside and monitors the other escorts as they lean against some pillars with their weapons held in varying positions.

Inside the council chamber, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, Yoda, Mace Windu, Ki Adi Mundi, Adi Gallia, Shakk Ti, Kit Fisto, Plo Koon, Saesee Tin, Eeth Koth, and Even Piell watched as the confirmed humans entered with the unidentified xenos. Skywalker was anxious to hear why his former padawan hadn't been sent back with her students. But his mind started to wander as there was no force signature from any

of the six beings. Not even a sliver of one.

"Welcome to the Jedi Temple. I understand your visit to the Senate opened many...options for you and your people." Windu asks.

"Yes, it was. I'm afraid i didn't catch your name." Says the older man.

"Jedi Master Mace Windu." Windu replies.

"Grand Admiral Hood, Colonel Xanders is to my right, Chief is to my left." The older man says.

"Chief? This man doesn't have a name?" Asks Gallia.

"He prefers to be adressed by his rank." Says the Colonel.

"And that would be...?" Asks Gallia.

"Master Chief Petty Officer." The Admiral says.

"Who are your companions?" Windu asks.

"I am Arbiter of the Sangheili and Covenant Seperatist Alliance." The being in the gold, bronze, and black armor replied.

The beings had lightsaber-type weapons on their belts alongside their side-arms and main weapons. Some of which Anakin had seen on Naboo in the hands of the Gungan rebels and some other beings. That rose the question of if they were supporting the CIS and was using this as a way to gain intel on Republic troop movements.

"We've seen weapons similar to tose your men carry Arbiter. They were in the hands of Confederacy of Independent Systems troops on a world they attacked. Are you supporting the CIS?" Skywalker asks.

"No, we are not. But the Covenant is." The Arbiter says.

"But you call yourself the Covenant." Skywalker says.

"Covenant Seperatist Alliance. We were once part of them before we found out the truth behind their vile lies." The Arbiter says, placing a heavy emphasis on Seperatist Alliance.

"And what 'lies' would those be?" Windu asks.

"The Covenant are a religious cult. Everyone of them are zealots and are bound to Covenant law. Any moderate deviation results in death and the shaming of the subjects family line. My people were told that the humans of the UNSC had desecrated multiple holy sites and were deemed a pest to be stomped out. In reality, the UNSC had done no such thing and had simply dug up a few to investigate. We had been lied to for four years!" The Arbiter shouts.

"What happened durring those four years?" Kenobi asks.

"Pure genocide against us. The outter colonies all but distroyed or evacuated, some of the inner colonies terrorized and partily dammaged, over a billion in casualties. Four years in, the Covenant faltered due to the Arbiter starting a revolt with his people. The

Colonel was one of the first few UNSC officers to go into combat with the Covenant and survive." Hood says.

"How did you become aware of our existence?" Fisto asks.

"Shortly after we went through some captured enemy transmissions and data caches. We then acted on that intel and were able to defeat the Covenant and release a large group of Sangheili prisoners from a prison camp and kill one of the three leaders of the Covenant. Said system was secured and patrols were set. Then we ran across your special operations team Omega and Delta in a pinch and helped them out." Rex says.

"Then your ship arrived in system and we ferried them over with some kids and a mech we recovered from the prison camp." Hood says

"Was there an older female with them?" Windu asks.

"There was." Hood says.

"This older female is a member of our order. We would like to know where she is." Skywalker says.

"Rich, this is your ballpark." Hood says.

"Memorial Military Cemetary, section A-15, grave marked unknown. Your Senate has already been informed." Rex says.

"We would like to have her body returned to us." Anakin says.

"We can't do that."

"Why the fek not?" Anakin asks.

"UNSC law. Exhumation of a buried corpse or the remains of any person killed in battle carries the sentence of at least ninty years in prison or death." Rex says.

"Why would that be?" Asks Koon.

"Sometimes bodies are unrecoverable after a battle. In order to have the family feel at ease, we erect a cemetary and place a gravestone and place a casket with that persons favorite personal belongings inside the grave in place of the body. If an unknown is buried and later identified, we place a gravestone with their name on it where accurate records state they were buried. It is an insult to those who have lost loved ones who are unrecoverable when a body marked unknown is identified and removed. It's also a desecration to the entire battlefield." Rex explains.

Just before Skywalker was about to talk again, Mel came to life on his HUD.

[Rich, i've just intercepted a Covie signal!]

"Where from?" Rex asks after cutting his external speakers.

[They seem to be near the Senate building, the structure you are in now, a military structure, and the spaceport.] Mel says.

Rex reactivates his external speakers.

"We got a Charlie Alpha!" Rex says, using the code for a Covenant attack.

The Arbiter grabs ahold of his energy blade while the two Zealots ready their weapons while the chief readies his rifle and Hood sets his hand on his modified M6C.

"What's going on?" Windu asks.

"Get Cole and tell him to move the damned fleet into open space and drop Blue and Thunder!" The human Admiral orders.

"I will not ask again, what is going on here!?" Windu shouts.

"A damned Covenant invasion of this planet! Johnson!?" The Colonel shouts.

The door to the chamber opens and a black armored male enters with three others and the other Sangheili.

"We got a damned Charlie Alpha, start fortifying this place. Doc, start setting up here. Hulk, you help Johnson and get a place where you can get a clear line of fire down that main corridor!" The Colonel orders.

Then an large explosion is heard and evrybody turns to the window and watches as thick column of smoke rises from the barracks of the Courasaunt Gaurd.

"Kenobi, Mundi, Koon, get the younglings to a safe place. Skywalker, try and get to your ship or the spaceport barracks, get as many troopers as possible and get them into the fight. The rest of us are going to lock down the Temple and help these people create fortifications." Windu orders.

"We will delay the Heretics advance long enough for you to do so." The Arbiter says after being handed a Carbine by one of the Zealots.

While the Jedi and the others were getting defences ready, the Arbiter was awaiting the Covenant to arrive, Admiral Hood was using a hand-held tac-com giving orders to Admiral Cole while the Chief was acting as his gaurd, and Doc had set up what seemed like a mini military-grade field hospital in the chamber.

IV bags, biofoam cans, biogel(biofoam in a gel) packets, tourniquets, bandages, blankets, and black, red, yellow, and green tags were already prepped for inevitable casualties. Black for dead, red for priority, yellow for moderate, and green for minor.

Above Courasaunt, the UNSC and CSA oint fleet was moving out from behind the dark side of the Courasaunti moon at full burn with weapons warming up. Just the sight of the ships at full burn scared a few of the GNR ship commanders who wisely got out of their way. Just as the GNR ships were about to open fire, reports of a multi-pronged attack on the surface had filtered through and that the joint fleet was supporting the Republic defence.

But the most shocking event occurred moments after the ships got into position. Several of the smallest craft headed into the upper atmosphere and dropped what appeared to be ordinance from the bottom of the craft. Then the craft continued their descent and the largest ships of the joint fleet launched small craft from hangers that headed to the surface.

The civilians of Courasaunt were in a massive panic. Police and clone troopers were fortifying key and important structures while wookiee-like beings with Weekway and Trandosian mercenaries, some short four foot tall creatures with large packs on their backs, and avian's armed with energy shields and sniper rifles started attacking the Courasaunt and Senate Gaurd barracks along with several of the Police Stations around the Senate, Jedi Temple, Naval yard, and the GAR complex.

The heaviest fighting was at the Senate and GAR complex. Troopers at the GAR complex were trying to get to the Senate before the Chancellor and/or the Senate members could be killed or taken hostage.

But, CSF, Courasaunt's police, and clone troopers that had been outside of the complex were defending the Senate by having the outer doors locked and security measures enacted that placed multiple heavy blast doors between the enemy and the offices of the Senate. Traps laid by the just rescued Omega and Delta squads with at least six ARC troopers were also taking their toll with stalling the enemy.

It would be one battle in a million for the inhabitants of Courasaunt, being the only time in the war that Courasaunt was openly attacked by an enemy since the Old Republic.

30. Chapter 30

UNSC FLEET

UNSC TROJAN HORSE

COURASAUNT

HIGH ATMOSPHERE

JUNE 2550

The second the alert went out, Ahsoka had become very frightened. During the trip, Rex had taught her things about the Covenant and what had happened to him while he had been with the UNSC. She feared for his life, but she knew he would be alright.

She had just finished altering her facial markings. Although they were supposed to be permanent, one could alter them with a very little known procedure that involved the force. Her new markings formed her eyebrows, two angular markings on her cheeks, and due to the fact she couldn't decide on what to change her forehead markings to, she left it without a single mark apart from a small 'tatoo' of Rex's name on her right temple.

She walked onto the bridge and watched as the Trojan entered the upper atmosphere of Courasaunt. She wouldn't be going on the ground,

but she would be helping coordinate support efforts with Thunder and their ground units. But she wanted to be on the ground. She wanted to be with her husband.

Husband. It seemed unreal. All those years of them being separated and other moving on, yet not forgetting the other. Then a chance encounter, one in a billion, and resulting in her 'faking' her death and joining him and the UNSC.

As the ship closed in on the tall buildings of Courasaunt, she saw several UNSC craft drop people off onto the roofs of the tallest structures. Sniper squads of five to twelve people would support clone troopers until UNSC forces or more clones would arrive. Gunships of varying classes and sizes were darting around. The ones in use the most were the Pelican and Hornet gunships.

The Hornet gunship was drastically different from the troop/assault Hornet. These gunships had two fairly large tri-barrel machine guns(same MG's that are on Warthogs) on each side and rocket pods just above the guns.

The Pelican gunship always had two chin-mounted MG's and a rear-firing grenade launcher to hit the enemy while the craft would pull up after a strafing run and to dissuade enemies from coming in from behind it. But, the craft could also have two different types of rocket pods, anti-armor and free-fire, placed onto pylons on the crafts wings. These could be discarded at any time or taken back to be rearmed and used again.

In comparison, the Pelican was more heavily armed, but the Hornet was more agile and smaller. The Hornet was used in urban combat situations where the larger Pelican could not go. The occasional F-41 'Broadsword' and F-51 'Hog' were also conducting CAS, Close Air Support, operations.

The F-51 'Hog' took multiple design and concepts from two craft. One from the early 21st and late 20th centuries and one from the early to mid 20th century. The first craft was the A-10 'Warthog', a fighter literally built around a massive rotary gun. The second was the P-51 'Mustang', a fast and agile fighter that carried bombs and six machine guns.

The F-51 'Hog' had four guns mounted in its wings in addition to a seven-barreled rotary rail gun(RRG). The entire craft was built around the RRG and the four 14.5 guns were added later to increase its firepower. The craft was practically a flying tank that could destroy a 'Scarab', whatever that was, and come out without a scratch.

So far, the battle was going badly for the Republic. Inside 500 Republica, Senator Amidala was watching the Senate and Jedi Temple being assaulted. C-3PO, a protocol droid built by Anakin, was also watching.

[Terrible, absolutely terrible! We must get someplace safe my lady!]
The droid says, panicked.

"3PO, calm down, we are far enough away from the battles to not be concerned. When they move closer, then i will become concerned."
Padme says.

Then a loud knocking is heard from the appartments door.

[I told you it wasn't safe!] 3PO shouts.

Padme grabs her blaster and takes cover behind some furniture.

"Shut up and get down!" Padme says, dragging hm to the flor and covering up his 'mouth', effectvely silencing him.

Then the appartment's door slides open and several figures walk in. They are in black and green armor and are armed.

"Perfect location. Set up over there Eagle and provide overwatch to Structure Beta. Petty Officer 058 will set up overwatch to Structure Alpha." A man says.

"Will do Cap." A black armored female says, walking over to a window, knocking it out, and setting up a large rifle. Another green armored figure does the same.

"Clear this place Gunny. Don't want any uninvited guests." The 'Cap' orders.

"Will do." The 'Gunny' says.

"You set up outside. Start getting traps ready incase any Covies decide to give us a welcoming party." The 'Cap' says to four others in green armor.

"Covies?" Padme whispers to herself, thinking.

Just as Padme connects the dots, the furniture lifts up and comes crashing down. Her weapon is knocked out of her hand and she is hauled up to her feet.

"We got a civvie!" The 'Gunny' says.

Captain Carlos Perez turns to where Gunny Keyes has his hand on a human female.

"Looks like we got a mech as well!" The Gunny adds.

"You live here?" Carlos asks.

"Yes i do." The woman answers.

"How many others are in the bulding i should know about?" Carlos asks.

"One Senator on almost every floor, not counting security details, serveants, attendants, and droids." The woman answers.

"Oh shit...Captain Lafayette, we have a situation!" Perez shouts into a direct com-line to the Trojan.

/What's going on Captain?/ A female voice answers.

"Who's on the line!? I need the Captain!" Perez half shouts.

/Lieutenaunt Colonel Ashla Xanders. The Captain is in a monitoring the situation which Lord Hood is currently engaged in!/ The Lieutenaunt Colonel shouts.

"S-sorry sir. But, we seem to have stumbled upon the housing for this 'Galactic Republic's' Senators!" Carlos says, shocked that the Colonels wife was on the Trojan.

The Colonel had talked about his girl once and a while, but not that often. He did say, however, that she would eventually join Thunder after her then current tour of duty with another unit was complete.

/Is it occupied?/ The Lieutenaunt Colonel asks.

"Yes ma'am. We have a Senator here with a mech and there's only eight of us. We don't have the man-power to search this entire structure and support both objectives!" Carlos reports over the shots of both Spartan and ODSN snipers.

/I'm on the way down to personally aid in the search. A Hornet and two Pelicans have been made available for transport of subjects to a secure location./ The Lieutenaunt Colonel says.

"Yes ma'am. Thunder one-six out." Carlos says.

At the Jedi Temple, things had heated up considerably and the escort team with the Jedi were holding their positions at the library, training arena, and council chamber. Training devices had been set to maximum power and were jetting across the ceilings and floors, shooting stun bolts at the approaching enemy.

Another strategy was directing enemies into the training arena and having waves of captured and refurbished robotic 'hostiles' set to the highest settings, ambushing the Covenant when they walked in a certain distance. Droids were scooting along maintenance halls and causing as much mayhem as possible by messing with the lights, doors, and climate controls.

Some mouse droids, the most inexpensive droid's out there, were being used as suicide bombers and detonating themselves in the midst of enemies after falling from grates in the ceilings, zooming out of maintenance hatches, or out from behind random objects.

Just as the defenders were beginning to lose ground, windows shattered inside the council chamber and ODSN's from Thunder, SpecOps Sangheili, and Marine Force Recon troops arrived and began fighting.

Two of the Pelicans had taken up position and took Lord Hood and the Arbiter out of the Temple with Rex, Hulk, Doc, Johnson, and the Chief boarding the other. They were going to another high-priority site. Rex had gotten the notification of the previously forgotten 500 Republica, the housing structure for most of the Senators, was now in danger of being taken over by the Covenant.

Captain Perez was already there and Ahso...Ashla was en-route with two Pelicans and a Hornet gunship. The apartment of Senator Amidala was to apparently be used as a sniper's hide to overlook both the

Temple, Structure Beta, and Senate building, Structure Alpha. And to top it all off, the Covenant had apparently seen or discovered the significance of the structure and were advancing on it in force.

At the shipyards, Anakin Skywalker had arrived after fighting his way in. He was attempting to get to the 501st, 212th, and 327th organized and into the growing battle. Captain Fives had called in and reported that he had been shot down after leaving the temple and that his small group of troopers were holed up with some CSF, Courasaunt's police force, and some other Courasaunt guard troopers at a small detachment on 'Storefront Row'.

'Storefront Row' was a long surface street with many stores of varying sizes. Anything legal you needed, you could find along this street. It was also one of the many routes that led to both the Temple and the Senate districts. That made it a major target for the 'Covenant'.

Anakin knew that if that area fell, so would the Senate and Temple. He had been able to get the majority of the three units organized and ready to move. The three ships the troopers had been on had left with orders to help defend the space above Courasaunt.

He had ordered Commander Cody to send the 212th to the Temple, Commander Bly to the Senate, and he would take the 501st to reinforce 'Storefront'. If things went to plan, he would come out the hero of the Battle of Courasaunt, having saved the Temple and Senate from destruction.

At 500 Republica, Rex and the rest of Thunder were clearing the apartments. So far they had been able to locate Bail Organa, Dutchess Satine, their respective security. There were other high-profile people inside the tower who had also been recovered.

So many, Rex had to call for a Frigate, the UNSC In Amber Clad, to be on stand-by and have it's troop transport Pelicans to evacuate the tower and support the ground operations. At that moment, the Covenant had advanced to the base of the tower and were engaging the towers security force and some UNSC and CSA members who had arrived via Pelican with his wife.

Padme Amidala had refused to be the first evacuated and volunteered to help with the evacuation. Her apartment was now central command for the op. Rex had just arrived at the balcony where officers would be deposited, given a mission, and head back out with their troops.

Inside, he saw Ahs-Ashla, Captain Perez, and Padme looking over some schematics of the tower. Beside the Senator stood C-3PO. The most annoying droid Rex could ever think of apart from the dim-witted pit droids who didn't know left from right.

[Oh my!] The droid exclaimed as it saw him enter.

Padme lifted her head and Ashla turned around as did Captain Perez.

"Glad you could join us Colonel." Perez says.

"Yeah. How's the op been doing so far?" Rex asks, removing his

helmet.

"Farily well. The entire upper floors have been evacuated, most of te central, and we've been told the lower floors are administrative offices for the towers security, janitorial service, and storage rooms. It's also where the Covies are trying to gain entry." His wife says.

"Who's down there holding the Covies off?" Rex asks.

"Most of the towers security detail. Those not down there are helping wth evacuation. After they've cleared an area, they trigger some sort defence mechanisms to seal off that section." Perez explains.

"Why's she still here? With a mech no less." Rex asks.

"I could ask the same as you trooper." Padme asks.

"Rich, this is Senator Amidala of... Where are you from again?" Ashla asks.

"Naboo." Padme says.

"Ehhh, you were there with that Republic Delegation." Rex says.

"Back on topic, how much longer can they hold out down below?" Johnson asks as he walks over.

"The Security Chief said that they could hold for about an hour. That was thirty minutes ago. Since then, i've seen Grunts, Jackals, and Brutes enter the building in force. A Sangheili SpecOps Commander named Uzthe reported that he was holding ground and the Covies were bringing in suicide grunts supported by heavy gunners." Perez says.

"Sound's like i'd better get down there. I want her and that mech out of here on the next bird." Rex orders, pointing is helmet at Amidala before heading twards the door.

"Will do." Ashla says as Captain Perez, Rex, Doc, Johnson, Hulk, and the Chief head out.

31. ---Important Update---

-Authors Notice-

I've just read my story and i've discovered multiple plot erors and lack of charachter devlopment.

Due to this find, i will be doing a complete re-wright and will be taking out and adding more.

I will need several ODST, Navy, Marine, Spartan, and Covenant OC's. I already have several, but i need more.

The requirements are first and last name that cannot reflect that of a cannon character, their prefrered weapons(side arm and primary), what they did in civillian life, any u

nique and defying characteristics/markings(tatoos or designs on armor), and if they are male or female.

If a character is a sniper, heavy weapons spcialist, or Spartan, they may have three weapons, two primaries and one secondary(sniper rifle/heavy weapon, carbine/rifle/shotgun/SMG, and pistol),

or one primary and two secondaries(rifle and two pistols/SMG's).

Thanks for all the support.

Jase-412

End
file.